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QUAKER WOMEN

1650—1690

BY

MABEL RICHMOND BRAILSFORD



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To
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

IN endeavouring to present a picture of the work and ideals of the first Quaker women of England one is struck by two facts—the modern atmosphere both of thought and effort which surrounds the ancient chronicles, and the strange chance which has left them unknown and unexplored, save by experts, for more than two centuries. The memory of the American women of the same period, who gave its woman martyr to Quakerism, has, however, been recently revived by Dr. Rufus Jones, in his study of the “Quakers in the American Colonies.” For this reason their history, thrilling as it is, has been referred to in the following pages only in so far as it intermingled with the lives of the missionaries from England.

Of the host of heroic Englishwomen who travelled, preached, and suffered at the time of Fox, three only have escaped oblivion, and they are celebrated rather through their connection with men who made history than for their own interest and merits. Mary Penington and her daughter “Guli”—the mother-in-law and wife of William Penn—being already the subjects of biography, are omitted from this account. Margaret Fell, the wife of Fox, though equally well known, is, perforce, included, no study of early Quakerism being possible without her.

The diffidence with which a non-Quaker must face a task of this kind has been lessened as far as might be by the generosity and helpfulness of the Friends themselves. The chief sources of information upon the beginnings of Quakerism are the manuscript records, for the most part unpublished, which are preserved with contemporary books

and pamphlets in the Friends' Library at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, London. I am indebted for my introduction to the Library to Dr. Rendel Harris, and for preliminary direction in research to Mr. William C. Braithwaite, the modern historian of Quakerism. I have had free access to the printed and written documents on which this book is based, thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Norman Penney, the Librarian, who is the Editor of *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, and an expert in Quaker history. To Mr. Penney I am further indebted for considerable aid with the proof-sheets.

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking himself and his assistants, Miss Crawshaw and Miss Smith, for their ready help and interest, which made the work of research in the Library both easy and delightful.

I should like also to express my gratitude to Mr. Edward Garnett, to whom I owe the first suggestion of this study in early Quakerism; and to my friend, Mr. A. H. Charteris, for detailed criticism and untiring practical help and encouragement.

Portions of Chapters IV., VI., XIV., and XV., have appeared in the *Englishwoman*, *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Glasgow Herald*, and are reprinted here by courtesy of the Editors.

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CHAPTER I

GEORGE FOX, AND HIS INFLUENCE UPON THE WOMEN OF HIS DAY

IN the year 1647, when George Fox, a lad of twenty-three, began his first missionary journey through the Midlands, there might well have seemed no room in England for the spread of a new gospel. Religion was already the guiding force in politics and the dominant factor in the estrangement of King Charles and his people. The translation of the Bible had brought life and vigour to a creed which had become through the centuries a matter of tradition or vicarious observance. An impetus had been given to thought, and a sanction to discussion, which was making itself felt through every department of national life.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century had deposed the central authority in Church affairs, and split the religious world into almost as many schools of thought as there were thinkers. While the Independents and Presbyterians formed the two main divisions of the Puritan Church, a list has been drawn up of forty-six sects which flourished during the Commonwealth, deriving their names, for the most part, from some isolated doctrine or newly-developed heresy which it was their mission to emphasize. Each attracted to itself a greater or lesser number of adherents, whose hands were against every member of the other forty-five sects, and whose business in life was to confute them in public argument or printed pamphlet. Outward peace had been established under Cromwell's government, but the war of words

which raged round these religious standards was as bitter in its enmity and as disintegrating in its social effects as the Civil War itself.

It was not as the founder of a seven-and-fortieth sect that George Fox began to travel through Nottingham and Derby into Yorkshire, preaching in the open air, in private houses, and to the congregation assembled in the "steeple-house." Indeed, for three years after its first proclamation, those who received his message were known by no distinctive title. They continued to call themselves after the existing society from which many of them had been drawn, "Children of the Light"—a name which emphasized Fox's leading doctrine—or, it might be, by the simple name of Friends. It was not until 1650 that the name Quaker was imposed upon them, as the name Methodist was imposed upon the followers of John Wesley, in derision and by an enemy, "because," so Fox explains the title, "wee bid ym tremble att ye Word of God." His was no new gospel, but a summons to believers to return to the first principles of a common Christianity—a summons which, where it was obeyed, must bring the reconciliation of petty differences, the resolving of doubts, and the satisfaction of the longing soul.

For Puritanism, based though it was upon the newly-translated Bible, had proved itself to be in no sense a revival of Christianity. From the beginning it was a destructive rather than a constructive influence. From the suppression of the monasteries down to the imprisonment and torture of the Quakers, violence had been its main argument for conversion. The Old Testament had entered, indeed, into the very blood of the English nation. The wars of Joshua and the denunciatory Psalms were at once the inspiration and justification of statesman and soldier. But the letter of the Law had killed the spirit of the Gospel, and so slight was the influence wielded by the New Testament upon their contempo-

aries, that the Authorized Translators of 1611 might have spared the latter part of their labour. The Pharisee, with his long prayers and his contempt for other sects, was the typical figure from the Gospels who found his reflection upon that modern stage. The Civil War was a struggle between the spirit of the Renaissance and the spirit of Judaism, and it was the God of Battles who led the Parliament to victory.

Consciously or unconsciously, the Reformers worked out this parallel to its smallest detail. The English nation was a chosen priesthood, a peculiar people: it would have no King but God. The Ten Commandments were enforced with a literalness which took no count of the later injunction: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The graving or painting of an image, and the eating of mince-pies at Christmas, met with an equal condemnation. The ingenuity developed in the campaign against witches would have done credit to a braver cause, and any lonely woman was liable to pay the price of her eccentricity by death at the stake.

It was by the place which it accorded to women that the Puritan revival revealed most clearly its divergence from Christian standards. When the Reformers chose Leviticus rather than the Gospels for their model, they confined the influence of Puritanism, national movement though it was, within the masculine half of the nation.

The participation of women has been an integral feature of every Christian revival since the days when they "ministered of their substance" to the little band in Galilee. It was in defence of a downtrodden woman, and for the instruction of a solitary, that their Master revealed most openly the spirit of His message. As succeeding centuries brought their decay and their awakening, women have not been wanting to play the part assigned them—whether a passive part, like that of Luther's "Käthchen," who left her convent and stood

side by side with her unfrocked bridegroom, an object-lesson to a scandalized but half-converted Europe; or whether, like Susanna Wesley at Epworth, they moulded the lives and planted the ideals which were to change the face of England. Only in the great Puritan revival has their interest in religion been ignored or repudiated. Mahomet took for his working theory the maxim that women were born without souls, and one thousand years later extremists were found amongst the Puritans who cherished the same doctrine.

The status of women in England had been immeasurably lowered by the revolt against Roman Catholicism, and the change in their position, scarcely felt as yet in the aristocratic and High Church party, was accepted by the Reformers as an article of faith. It had been natural for them to hold an honoured place under a creed whose articles imply the worship of the Virgin, and whose supreme symbol is the Mother and Child. Nor were their advantages sentimental alone. The head of a great religious house was a trained business woman and administrator, with the privilege of a seat upon ecclesiastical councils. The nuns under her charge enjoyed a position comparable to that of professional women of our own day. They had scope for any talent which they possessed, and abundant leisure for its cultivation. They became the centre of learning; the daughters of neighbouring families flocked to the convent as to a college, where music, art, literature, and languages, were all open to them.

The suppression of the convents in the sixteenth century deprived the women of England of their chief means of education, and many of an honourable career. It is significant that the feminist author, Mary Astell, writing one hundred and fifty years later, proposed a modified conventual system as the remedy for the subjection of women.

The gilds, convicted of being "superstitious founda-

tions," were suppressed during the same period of Protestant reformation, and their abolition proved to be another blow struck at women's independence. In the light of modern trade usages, it is curious to read of the chivalrous protection extended to working women during the Middle Ages. When a law was passed by Edward III. restricting handicraftsmen to the use of one "mystery," a special clause exempted women from this restriction, and they were encouraged "to work as they had been accustomed." Later an Act was framed in their defence, during the reign of Edward IV., which forbade the importation of silk and lace by "Lombards and other alien strangers, imagining to destroy the craft of the silk spinsters, and all such virtuous occupations for women."* After the Reformation, however, the small traders, a class which included numbers of middle-class women, existed, to quote a modern synopsis, "only in the teeth of laws and proclamations."†

By the suppression of the convents and the abolition of the guilds, women were restricted to the one career for which no cultivation or training was regarded as necessary. Marriage became so urgent a requirement that the introduction of child-marriage followed as an almost inevitable consequence. This robbed the young girl of any chance of education which remained to her, and launched her upon the cares of a household, or the dubious mercies of a mother-in-law, at an age when she should have been playing with her dolls. The eldest daughter of Charles I. was ten years old when she left her father's house to become the wife of the Prince of Orange. In 1672 Evelyn writes with regret of the marriage of one of the natural sons of Charles II. to Lord Arlington's only daughter—"a sweet child, if ever there was any." The

* Article on Women in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," ninth edition.

† "The Status of Women under the English Law, 1066-1909," by Beatrice and Mary Wallis Chapman.

bride being at the time only five years of age, the ceremony was ratified seven years later.*

The practice was not confined to the Court. Lady Capulet was relating no extraordinary experience when she told the fourteen-year-old Juliet, "I was your mother much upon these years when you are now a maid." By the payment of two crowns, any English children could be married in the daytime in any parish, and, according to Stubbes, in his "Anatomy of Abuses,"

"Little Infants in swadling clouts are often married by their ambitious Parents and frends, when they know neither good nor evill."†

The new generation of Englishmen was brought into the world and trained by mothers of fourteen, fifteen, or seventeen.

Meanwhile the decay of education and the closing of every avenue to ambition led little by little to the evolution of a type of woman fitted to serve the end of her circumscribed existence. Henceforth it was for man only that she must live, move, and have her being; and it is a moot point whether he or she was the greater loser by this restriction. The specialization of her interests defeated its own end, for her untrained mind, no less than her narrowed horizon, rendered her unfit to be her husband's mental companion, while her constant anxiety to please put a stop to all frank comradeship. The type was slow in perfecting itself, and for nearly a century Nature struggled with Art against its production. Queen Elizabeth was on the throne when John Knox published his "Monstrous Regiment of Women," and while Charles II. was filling Whitehall with a troop of women devoted only to his pleasure, Mary Dyer was

* "Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn," pp. 332, 372. Edited by William Bray. Routledge.

† Quoted in "The Life of Margaret Winthrop," by Alice Morse Earle, p. 254. London, 1895.

hanged in New England for the sake of her religion, and Mary Fisher had carried the Quaker message to the Grand Turk at Adrianople.

One may trace the growth of this tragic doctrine of inequality in the life of John Milton. By nature and early training he was a romanticist, with all the romantic love of laughter, colour, and sweet sound. He shared the romantic attitude towards women, and his early Italian sonnets are linked by more than a common language with the poets of the Renaissance. His pamphlet on "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce," written during his first disastrous honeymoon, is an impassioned plea for the marriage of the soul and the intellect, without which the marriage of the body is as the union of beasts. There is little trace of Puritan doctrine in his definition of "this pure and more inbred desire of joining to itself in conjugal fellowship a fit conversing soul (which desire is properly called love)," and his statement that "in God's intention a meet and happy conversation is the chiefest and noblest end of marriage" is a direct defiance of even Prayer-Book morality.*

Yet it is a matter of history that Milton's own daughters grew up without instruction. They were trained as brainless automata to supply his wants, and learned to hate their father and his unreasonable service.

He may have been embittered by his first marriage, from which death, the only legal divorce, had at last delivered him. It is more likely that twenty years in the furnace of political controversy had shrivelled his boyish idealism, while contact with the new generation of untaught and uncultivated women had weaned him from his conviction of the equality of the sexes. The often-cited Eve of "Paradise Lost" is sufficient evidence of the gulf which separated him in his maturer years from the last of the Elizabethans. The joyous after-glow of the Renais-

* Milton's Prose Works, vol. iii., p. 187. Edited by J. A. St. John. London, 1848.

sance had faded. Not Shakespeare, but Knox and Calvin, ruled the consciences of England, and the delights of the senses, with the adoration of the creature, stood condemned before their stern tribunal. In the disgrace which had overtaken music and painting and every pleasant thing woman was involved. Queen of the Knight-at-Arms, inspiration and theme of poet and painter, she had now become "stuff o' the conscience," and love and marriage themselves a weakness of the flesh. The licentiousness of the Restoration had put the seal upon her abasement.

Yet Milton's earmarking of the sexes—"He for God only, she for God in him"—was not allowed to go altogether unchallenged, even by the women of his own generation. Mary Astell, who preceded Mary Wollstonecraft by a full century, takes the passage as a peg on which to hang an eloquent, witty, and most modern-sounding remonstrance:

"'Tis certainly no Arrogance in a Woman," she writes in the preface to her "Reflections upon Marriage," "to conclude that she was made for the service of God, and that this is her end. Because God made all things for Himself, and a Rational mind is too noble a being to be made for the sake and service of any Creature. The Service she at any time becomes obliged to pay to a Man, is only a Business by the bye—just as it may be any Man's Business and Duty to keep Hogs: he was not made for this, but if he hires himself out to such an Employment he ought conscientiously to perform it."*

This clear-sighted satirist was born shortly after the Restoration, and her three forgotten books—"Reflections upon Marriage," "A Defence of the Female Sex," and "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies"—are in themselves a powerful plea for the equality of the sexes. While the authoress is mainly concerned with the disabilities of women, she devotes many pages to practical schemes for their removal. She hints in a preface at a possible rebellion, should the eyes of women be once opened to see their

* "Reflections upon Marriage," by Mary Astell. Third edition. London, 1706.

position of servitude, and they so well united as to rise together against it. But her "Serious Proposal to the Ladies" aims at less revolutionary measures. She was convinced that "Ignorance and a narrow Education" lay at the root, not only of the subjection of women, but of the lowness of their moral standards, and she resorted to the old monastic ideal as the remedy both for these evils and their results.*

Mary Astell was a voice crying in the wilderness. Her scheme for a religious Academy of Women, being reminiscent of Popery, was slain at its birth by Bishop Butler, in the interests of Protestantism. Its author was effectually restrained from further mischief by a scurrilous and totally unfounded attack upon her moral character, published in the *Tatler*.†

Yet even in the hour of her failure there was a body of women at work in England, who might have taken for their motto her despairing plea, that they "were made for the service of God, and that this was their end." Fox's women followers had ignored the restrictions of custom, and set at naught the growing ideal of womanly fragility and dependence. Burning with a message which could only be delivered at the cost of imprisonment or flogging, and having, again in the words of Mary Astell, "a wide field for their imaginations to roam in," they travelled through England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and across the seas. When the honour of women had become a plaything or a fiction, they moved up and down in the country without escort, or accompanied, it might be, by a man of their own age, their fellow-preacher. They gave ungrudgingly of their time, their money, and their energies, reaping obloquy, pain and poverty for their reward, and through the evil days of the Restoration they kept alight in England the flame of purity and valour.

When Fox, at the beginning of his work, had been faced

* "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest." 1696.

† Article on Mary Astell in the "Dictionary of National Biography."

by the problem of "the true and greatest interests" of women, he had found a solution at once simpler and more satisfactory than their seclusion in a nunnery. His great doctrine of the Inward Light left no room for artificial standards. It acknowledged no dividing line between class and class or man and woman. The Light of God, the presence of God Himself within the soul—this only it recognized and honoured.

As the women preachers flocked to his standard, the doctrine of their inferiority required no verbal contradiction. Day by day it was refuted in the sight of all men by their own persuasive eloquence, their sufferings and their heroism. Still less was Fox at pains to supply their lack of education, denying as he did the necessity of learning as a preliminary to preaching the Gospel. But when he encountered the root heresy that "women have no souls," he dismissed it with an ingenious appeal to the letter of Scripture: If women have no souls, then the Virgin Mary referred to that which had no existence when she sang: "My soul doth magnify the Lord"!*

This controversy, which is mentioned by Sewel, the contemporary Quaker historian, is the first recorded instance in which Fox, who was to become the consistent champion of women, broke a lance in their defence. By his own personality, at once winning and courageous, no less than by the character of his message, he was peculiarly fitted to be their apostle. From his boyhood he had accustomed himself to look at facts through his own eyes. His deductions were unbiassed by the opinions of his time, and he was singularly unaffected by its preoccupations. While his country was rent by the Civil War, and the liberties and rights of Englishmen were being fought out upon the English fields, Fox lingered amongst the sheepfolds evolving his theory of the ideal Church, or listened for the

* "History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People called Quakers," etc., vol. i., p. 20. By William Sewel. Third edition. London, 1795.

voice of God in the garden, in the cool of the day. Nor was his mind distracted by the warring cries of school or college. He knew little of education as it is understood in those establishments. To the end of his life the writing of a letter was a voyage in uncharted seas, and his only book was the Bible. His passion for truth gave him his sense of the value of words, and the vivid simplicity of his style may be traced back to the Minor Prophets.

In this solitude of mind he developed the faculty of looking through externals to the essential nature. Ignoring outward distinctions, he discerned the souls of men as clearly as their bodily presence. The border-line between mental and physical was almost non-existent, and he lived habitually in a world which was closed to his fellows, except in rare moments of illumination.

This clearness of vision, together with his discriminating sympathy, preserved him from the narrow-mindedness which had become an essential element in religion; while the most lovable sense of humour, which he seems to have shared with Cromwell alone of all his religious contemporaries, set him a whole world apart from the bigoted reformers of his time.

Fox had early adopted an unconventional attitude towards the Bible, the Church, and the "means of grace," all of which had become the objects of superstitious reverence. He knew the Scriptures by heart, and, as was seen in his quotation from the *Magnificat*, was an adept in the wielding of isolated texts against his adversaries. But neither the printed page nor the arguments of accredited teachers could "speak to his condition." The clergymen to whom he applied for help in his mental sufferings had failed him one by one, his own parish priest even appropriating some of Fox's ideas to embellish his sermons, "for which," as Sewel naïvely remarks, "George did not like him." It was then, walking in the fields, that he made the epoch-making discovery: "To be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not

enough to make a man to be a minister of Christ." After which, so runs the simple narrative, "he was unwilling to go any more to church."

The second revelation (or, more properly, rediscovery, for Fox was but digging down to the forgotten foundations of Christianity) followed naturally upon the first. God who made the world did not dwell in temples made with hands. "The steeple-house, and yt ground on which it stoode, was noe more holier than yt mountaine." To him henceforth the Church was the name of a living organism, the family of God, and must not be applied to an old building (a "steeple-house," as he nicknamed it) of stones and mortar. Within his own soul he found at last the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. In the open country, walking solitary along the hedgerows or in the fields, the will of God was revealed to him.*

A conviction of the unity of the Creation lay at the root of all his thinking. From his boyhood, when his master's flock had flourished under him as under no other shepherd, he had lived, like St. Francis, in fellowship with the animals. His love for horses, and his expert horsemanship, are most clearly to be read between the lines of the Journal. One of his rare flashes of anger was directed against the Welsh ostler who was stealing his horse's oats—"a wicked theiveish people, to robbe ye poore dumbe creature of his foode, which I had rather they had robbed me."† He had the trees and the flowers for his friends, and at one time his knowledge of the nature of plants became so intimate that he was tempted to devote his life to the collecting of simples and the practice of an herbalist. He despised none of "the good creatures of God," and did not deny to wine and beer

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 14-22, taken from the first sixteen pages of Fox's Journal (Ellwood edition, 1694).

† Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 280 (Cambridge edition, 1912, edited by Norman Penney, F.S.A.).

their own use and place. Although he hated the smell of tobacco, he drew a whiff from a pipe which was offered to him, lest it should be thought that he "had not unity with ye Creation."*

It was, therefore, with no sense of effort or condescension that he claimed for man and woman equal rights and equal responsibilities. It is significant that the first of the long series of interruptions by Friends in the "steeple-house" was made by Fox in defence of a woman who had asked a question in an open meeting, and been promptly silenced, on the ground of her sex, by the presiding clergyman.† Such teaching made a peculiar appeal to the women of his time, and they responded in ever-increasing numbers to a Gospel which at once sanctioned and demanded the exercise of all their faculties. Not youthful enthusiasts alone, but middle-aged women, whose sentient lives, according to the standards of the day, were already a closed page, drew hope and inspiration from Fox's call to service.

His first convert was Elizabeth Hooton, a married woman of nearly fifty years of age, who became, after himself, the first preacher amongst the Quakers. Margaret Fell, whose "convincement" followed in 1652, was known henceforth as the "nursing-mother" of Quakerism. Her home at Swarthmoor Hall became the one fixed point in its fluctuating fortunes, while her money, her leisure, and her unusual gifts of organization, were placed at the service of every persecuted Quaker and every struggling society.

The message appealed to all ranks and conditions. The servant-girl obtained the leave of her master, and crossed the seas to New England and to Turkey, preaching the Gospel. The rich yeoman's widow, proud of her farm stock and her household goods, began to keep open house for the travelling preachers, and gladly suffered the loss of her property at the hands of clergy-

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 44.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 29.

man or magistrate. Jane Stuart, a natural daughter of James II., turned from the Court, and earned her living in the fields or at the spinning-wheel, that she might cast in her lot with the persecuted Friends, and worship God in their fashion.

There is no evidence that Fox ever encouraged the pretensions of perfection, even of divinity, which were made for him by his admirers. Particularly after the fall of James Nayler, who had played Whitefield to his Wesley, he shunned the worship of his women followers, which had led his friend astray. But there remained a devotion, love, and confidence, which even now make touching reading in the old manuscripts. His paper written upon the death of "De(a)r An Whighthead" may still be seen at the Friends' Library, a farewell tribute from the old man to a girl who had "come afoot above 200 miles" to him at his summons when he lay in the dungeon at Launceston Castle. There she had bought and dressed his meat, keeping the accounts for him and his fellow-prisoners, while by her "good and blameless life," rather than by any words that she spoke, she drew the hearts of the Cornish people to them and to the truths for which they suffered. Women who felt the call to more distant service travelled at Fox's suggestion, or with his approval. His spirit was never far away as they moved to and fro upon their missionary journeys. He was their "deare Father," of whom they prayed not to be forgotten, for, as one dauntless woman declared to him, "My soul breatheth to thee over all the mountains and seas!"

The work which women did in the Quaker community was put upon a definite basis of organization in 1660. The task of relieving the poverty and distress caused by the increasing persecution had grown too heavy for the Men's Meeting alone, and Fox instituted the Women's Meeting to assist and advise them. In face of a storm of opposition it took root and flourished, proving itself

a source of ever-spreading usefulness. Sick-visiting and poor-relief, the care of prisoners, the providing of situations for servant-girls, and the apprenticing of the boys of poor Friends—these, with the investigation and suppression of scandals, made up its varied functions. The Women's Meeting acted as an Advisory Board, or Second Chamber, to the Men's Meeting down to 1896, when the two were merged in one General Council.

Such were some of the results of George Fox's life and teaching upon the women of his day. In that age of licentiousness on the one hand, and of narrow-minded bigotry on the other, the call had come as the breath of a new life, as the opening of prison doors to them that were bound. "Encourage all the women that are convinced, and minds virtue, and loves the truth, and walks in it, that they may come up into God's service, that they may be serviceable in their generation, and in the Creation.* . . . Let the Creation have its Liberty."

* MS. at Devonshire House—George Fox to the women's meetings.

CHAPTER II

ELIZABETH HOOTON—A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY

ELIZABETH FRY

GEORGE Fox gained his first adherent in 1647, while as yet he had no clear light upon his own ministry, and was earning his bread as a shoemaker.* “Travelling into Nottinghamshire,” says Sewel, “there he met with a tender people, and among these one Elizabeth Hooton, of which woman more will be said in the sequel: with these he had some meetings and discourses.”† This “tender people” was the remnant of a great body of Baptists which had once flourished in the neighbourhood of Nottingham. Before Fox’s coming, however, they had been split up and scattered, half the community having fallen away from their religious ideals, and continued their Sunday meetings only “to play at shovel-board and to be merry.” The other half, smitten with the mental restlessness which was a symptom of the times, went to swell the number of “Separatists”—small cliques of religious-minded people unattached to any sect.‡ These were the “shattered Baptists” of Fox’s Journal,—for, despite his dislike of nicknames, he had an instinct for the right word, and a relentless knack of affixing a label. They gave an eager welcome to this inspired shoemaker. His preaching, according to Sewel, was still “mean and weak”; it lacked the forcefulness and confidence which were to be learnt in the hard school of

* Whiting, “Persecution Exposed,” etc., p. 208. London, 1715.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 21.

‡ William C. Braithwaite, “Beginnings of Quakerism,” p. 43. Macmillan, 1912.

Derby Prison. Yet "the Lord's power," he was able to report, "wrought mightily and gathered many of them." Chief among their number was Elizabeth Hooton, a married woman, of middle age and in comfortable circumstances—not at first sight a likely convert for an unknown lad of twenty-two to attract by his preaching. Yet their friendship began at his first coming to Mansfield, and was broken only by her death.

It seems probable that this earliest friend and convert of George Fox was a preacher amongst the Baptists before her conviction, and it would be a fascinating study, if it were possible, to trace her influence in the attitude which Fox afterwards adopted towards the work of women in the Church.

Great as was the debt which these "shattered Baptists" owed to his inspiration, it was more than cancelled by their unconscious contribution to the doctrines and polity of Quakerism. Their influence can scarcely be exaggerated, coming as it did at that critical period when Fox's hold upon religious forms and traditional authority had been shaken, and all his beliefs cast into the melting-pot. When he began, a few years later, to formulate his conclusions, a close parallel appeared between the teaching and church government of Quaker and Baptist. The Baptists were opposed to tithes and to a "hireling ministry." Their ideal was a complete separation between Church and State. Even the cardinal Quaker doctrine of the "Inner Light" had been anticipated and expounded in a book called "The Drag-Net," published by Denne, the most noted of the Baptist preachers, in the year 1646, the date of Fox's first acquaintance with the Nottingham Separatists.*

But family quarrels, it is said, are always the hardest to heal. Elizabeth Hooton, on leaving the Baptists, "testified against their deceit," an action typical of the enmity and recrimination which were to embitter the

* Braithwaite, p. 12.

intercourse between the two Churches. Fox's Journal bristles with his encounters with the "Jangleinge Baptists," who must have recognized the likeness between their Church and the Quakers, while they resented the power and courage which animated the new sect to the depletion of their own long-established meetings.

It was towards the end of 1648, or the beginning of 1649, that Fox left his trade, and his circle of like-minded friends in Nottinghamshire, "commanded to go abroad into the world." It seems to have been at the same time that Elizabeth Hooton said farewell to her husband and children, to become the first woman-preacher of the new doctrine.

Although the preaching of women was not a complete novelty in England, it had not outlived the ridicule and opposition aroused at its beginning. Yet the early apologists of Quakerism were at no great pains to defend the practice. Out of the 574 pages of his "Apology," Barclay devotes but one to "the Preaching of Women," considering that "manifest experience" of its usefulness "puts the thing beyond all controversie."* A pamphlet written by Margaret Fell, herself a powerful preacher, gives a more detailed statement of the case from the point of view of the orthodox reader of the Scripture. Passing Old and New Testament in review, she fastens on the *Magnificat* as an example of a better sermon preached by a woman, than could be composed by any of the "blind priests." "Are you not here beholding to the woman for her sermon, to use her Words, to put into your Common Prayer, and yet you forbid Women's speaking?"† A home thrust indeed!

But argument is a vain weapon against a state of mind. Neither the proved orthodoxy of the practice nor its undeniable usefulness could reconcile the average Englishman to the spectacle of his wife or daughter instructing

* Barclay's "Apology," p. 328. 1701.

† Works of Margaret Fell: "Women Preachers," pp. 331-350.

him from the pulpit. A tract printed in 1699 is eloquent of the opposition which the woman-preacher had encountered during the fifty years since Elizabeth Hooton first left her home to spread the Quaker message. The title is curious, and reveals as much as need now be known of the nature of the contents :

“A Friendly Dialogue between two Countrymen, the one a Christian and the other a Quaker [significant distinction!] concerning Women’s Preaching : Wherein is shown, that Women’s Preaching is contrary to the Scriptures, and to be accounted a Delusion of the Devil.”

Much of this opposition may have been due to the unconciliatory attitude taken up at the outset by the women themselves. By a strange anticipation, the first service undertaken by Fox’s followers was the interruption of public meetings. One cannot but feel a reluctant sympathy with the unhappy “priest” * of the period, whose meetings, like those of Cabinet Ministers of later date, were subject to interruption without warning, and his most eloquent discourses broken at any moment by the sudden shouting of home truths from a member of his congregation. His most cherished privileges—nay, his very livelihood—were the object of the attack. He had a poor revenge in the arrest of his tormentor, could she be found guilty of actual disturbance of the service, but there was at first no law to forbid the addressing of a congregation after the sermon had been delivered.

An entry in Fox’s Journal records that in the year 1650 Elizabeth Hooton suffered imprisonment “in yeffen country, for preacheinge ye gospell.” This was to prove the first of many captivities, and is probably the occasion referred to in a letter sent to Fox by Margaret Killam, one of his earliest preachers, from Newark. In this ingenuous account it is possible to study the “exercise of going to steeple-houses” from the inside, and to

* “Priest” was the name applied by Fox and the early Friends to paid preachers of every denomination.

follow the cunning efforts of the priest to secure the conviction of the intruder, whom he may have distinguished in his docile flock through her refusal to stand during the singing or to join in the responses.

"I was moved to goe to the steeple house and I was kept in silence whilst [*i.e.* until] their teacher had done, and hee gave over in subtilty a litle, and after began againe, thinkinge to have ensnared mee. And [he] said that I was subtill, but itt was false, for I was kept in innocency, and found nothings riseinge in mee till hee was downe. And when I spoke hee fled away, but many of his hearers stayed, and I was made in much meekenesse to declare the truth to their consciences, and they were very silent and attentive to heare, and did confesse itt was the truth which was spoken to them, and was troubled att their teacher that hee fled away. For itt was the same which did imprison Elizabeth Hooton and did ensnare her by his craft." *

Fox's active followers came for the most part from the ranks of young men and women of the lower middle class. Like her friend, Margaret Fell—a matron of thirty-eight at her "convincement"—Elizabeth Hooton was an exception to this rule of age and class. Her age seems to have made a great impression upon her fellow-workers. Her name is seldom mentioned without the prefix "old" or the qualification "an antient woman"; while one of her letters, written as early as 1650, is endorsed in another hand, "This was sent to the Meir of Darby from Goodde [Goody!] Hooton." With this in mind, one is struck by the fact that her faults, where any fault is apparent, are those commonly associated with extreme youth. She was easily swayed by impulse and enthusiasm, and boasted with joyful naïveté of her own importunity and rashness. She had a fierce sympathy with the oppressed and downtrodden, and never attained to the balanced judgment which ties the hands of middle age. A most brave and faithful friend, she courted danger and even death to obtain the release of

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 2.

her fellow-Quakers; and at seventy years of age she crossed the Atlantic to lay her bones in a strange country, for the sake of the love she bore George Fox, and for the hope of helping him in his weakness. At a time when her advocacy was likely to bring redoubled penalties upon her own head, she was writing letters from her prison, pleading for the reform of the gaols, and anticipating by one hundred and fifty years the work which her happier namesake, Elizabeth Fry, was to accomplish. Her earliest extant letter is addressed to the Mayor of Derby, and draws a contrast between the pitiable state of the poor prisoners and his own comfort and honour, warning him of the fate of Dives, "if he will not regard the poor and in prison."

The agitation for the reform of the gaols was as old as Quakerism itself, and dated from Fox's first imprisonment in Derby, in the year 1650. The wholesale imprisonment of Quakers during the forty years which followed converted their scattered protests into a continuous agitation. The cruelties and iniquities which were practised in the gaols were no longer done in secret. Public opinion may have been too brutalized to be affected by these revelations, or no responsible party may have been discovered to bear the burden of guilt. Whatever the reason, the prisons of England remained for nearly two centuries longer the breeding-ground of disease and the nursery of fresh crime.

Released from her captivity in Derby, Elizabeth Hooton seems to have passed the years from 1651 to 1653, with some brief intervals, in the prison of York Castle. During this period seven of the most prominent Friends in the North were confined in this fortress, the authorities hoping by these severe measures to check the rapid and alarming growth of Quakerism. Here was Mary Fisher, the servant-girl, who was to become the Apostle to the Colleges, the pioneer of Quakerism in New England, and the Ambassador of God to the Grand Turk himself, now for

a time silent perforce in prison, "for speaking to a priest." Here too was Jane Holmes, one of the most ardent of the early evangelists. She had cried her message through the streets of Malton, and suffered ducking as a scold. This rough treatment was probably the cause of the fever which came upon her in York Castle, transforming her, to the scandal of her friends, into "a wild eyrie spirit, which . . . kikt against reproof, and would not come to judgment."* But she left behind her in Malton a community of about fifty believers, some of whom, being shopkeepers, showed the depth of their conviction by a "Burning of Vanities—a great deal of ribboning, of silks and braveries, and such things."*

Repentance was a very practical word in the mouths of the early Quakers. Like John the Baptist, they regarded it not at all as a state of shame and tears: these symptoms might or might not accompany it. It was a turning away from one's evil courses, with a deliberate yielding of oneself to walk henceforth by the Light which dwelt within. This practical repentance frequently involved commercial loss, and was inevitably followed by persecution. The priests in particular watched these conversions with a jealous and hostile eye. No such results were to be expected from their own moral discourses. When, on her release from York, Elizabeth Hooton undertook a mission into Lincolnshire, she was quickly arrested for no graver fault than "exhorting the people to repentance."

In the year 1654 she served five months in Beckenham Prison, and after a brief taste of liberty she was committed to Lincoln Castle on a repetition of her offence. This confinement, which lasted three months, offered none of the redeeming features of the three years in York Castle. Here were no like-minded women, her fellow-prisoners, with whom she could discuss past victories or plan new campaigns. Here were no visitors to

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 40 and i. 373.

cheer them from the world outside—honoured leaders like Farnsworth and Dewsbury, passing through the city on their way from one scene of triumphant service to another. Shut in with evil-minded and foul-mouthed felons, abused by the keepers of the gaol, and, worse than all, muzzled by the priest, who locked the Quaker preacher away, safe from opportunity for interruption, while he held his “command” service, it was with a heart overflowing with pity and indignation that she set down her plea for reform. Beside its biographical interest, the document is invaluable for the light it sheds upon prison life and discipline at the time of the Commonwealth :

“Elizabeth Hooton, Prisoner in Lincoln Castle, pleads to him in Authority to reform the Abuses of the Gaol.

“O thou that art sett in Authority to doe justice and judgmente and to lett the oppressed goe free, these things are required att thy hands, look upon the pore prisoners, heare is that hath not an allowance although there be a greatt sum of mony comes out of the country sufficient to hellpe them all that is in want both their due allowance and to set them a worke which would labour. And those that are sent hither for debt, that their rates for beds, which is ten groats the weeke, may be taken downe [MS. torn] to reasonable rates. And theare beare, which is sold at such an unreasonable [MS. torn] their measure being so extreme littell, that it may be amended [MS. torn] and equity for many pore dettors is sett in here for a small dett and [MS. torn] a great deal of the score farr more than their dett and it is [MS. torn] greate disorder and wickednes, so that for oppression and profanenes I never came in such a place, because a malignant woman keeps the gole. Oppression in meat and in drink and in feese, and in that which they call garnishes, and in many other things. And I myself am much abused booth by hir and hir prissonars, and her houshold, so that I cannot walk quiatly abroad but be abused with those that belonge unto hir. When a drunken preist comes to reade command praire or to preach after his owne invention or Immaginations, then they locke me up, and all the rest are commanded to come forth to hear and so is keptt in blindnes.

“And so in drinking and profaines and wantones, men

and women together many times partte of the night which grefes the spirritt of God in me night and day. This is required of the, O man, to reforme this place as thy power and Authority doth allow. Ether remove strong drinke out of this place or remove the Golar. Seckondly that theare rates for theare beds may be taken downen. That theare garnishes and theare greate feese may be taken off and thease oppresed prissoners may come to some hearing, such as is wrongfully prissoned and that theare may be some beter order amongst the men and women which is prissonars to keepe them assunder and sett them a worke and sett them at libbirty that is not able to pay the feese, and to take out the disordered person which kipeth all in dissorder in carding and dicinge and many other vaine sportes and so I leave itt to thy conscience to redres the dissorders in this rewde place and so have I discharged my conscience [MS. torn] much upon me that thou mightest know itt and itt redress."*

While these things were being done at home, the sympathies of the suffering Church were profoundly stirred by the news which arrived from New England. Governor Endicott had undertaken the persecution of the Quakers with no more bloodthirsty motive than the cleansing of his beloved Puritan colony from sectaries, for, as the magistrates of Boston themselves expressed it, "We desire their lives absent rather than their deaths present."† But the passing of a law for the banishment of Quakers upon pain of death only resulted in the steady invasion of New England by Friends from Rhode Island or from the mother-country. Again and again the two months' voyage was undertaken by both men and women, with the object of remonstrating against the unjust law, and, if possible, of obtaining its repeal. But it is evident that the unspoken thought was ever present in their minds, that one martyr chosen from amongst them would plead more powerfully for justice than countless verbal protests sent from overseas.

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 27.

† Bowden's "History of the Society of Friends in America," vol. i., p. 195. London, 1850.

In 1659 two Quaker Englishmen offered up their lives upon the gallows. In 1660 Mary Dyer, who had been reprieved on the same occasion while the rope was about her neck, returned, as she said, "to finish her sad and heavy experience in the bloody town of Boston."* She came with a clear knowledge of the fate which awaited her, and was hanged on Boston Common on June 1, 1660.

It was evident that the law had not been framed solely as a deterrent. Yet, undaunted by these proofs of the relentless cruelty of the New England magistrates, the Friends at home could not even now content themselves with making their appeal to the King. With a courage which was almost superhuman in its carelessness of consequences, they continued to cross the sea, to protest face to face against the judges who had murdered their comrades, and, as must have seemed inevitable, to share the fate which they had met. Their action may help one to realize, in some faint measure, the bond which united this suffering community. Cut off from the outside world, and welded into one intimate family by the dangers which surrounded them, there was no humble member but might have echoed the comment of George Fox upon the Boston martyrdoms:

"I had a perfect sense of it, as though it had beene my selfe, and as though ye halter had beene putt about my necke."†

Mary Fisher, the maiden ambassador to Adrianople, had been the first Quaker to land in Boston, and the first to endure ignominy and banishment at the hands of the New England authorities. Thus, Elizabeth Hooton's sympathy had been awakened at the outset of the persecution by the sufferings of her old comrade of York Castle. The death of Oliver Hooton in the following year left his widow the mistress of a considerable farming property,

* Besse's "Sufferings of the People called Quakers," vol. ii., p. 206. London, 1753.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 5.

near Mansfield. But though she was now nearly sixty years of age, she paid no heed to the claims of ease and comfort. Her heart was with the persecuted Church at Boston, and she determined to use her newly gained wealth and independence in an effort for their relief. Her son Samuel, during his own visit to New England, left it on record that he "was against her coming";* but neither the opposition of her fatherless children nor her own expectation of almost certain death could avail to change her purpose. Her friend Joan Brocksoppe,† "who freely resolved to be her companion," was a minister from Derbyshire, stated by the historian Sewel to have been a woman almost as old as herself. By a strange freak of fortune, the memory of this elderly preacher is kept green by a letter written in her disparagement by William Caton, the adopted son of Margaret Fell, in all the omniscience and self-righteousness of his eighteen years. The extract gives a valuable glimpse of the tireless activity of these evangelists, and the spirit of discipline, almost military in its imperiousness, which seems to have governed their movements. In 1654, at the beginning of his own missionary journeys, Caton reports:

"Joan Brocksoppe is to goe towards London tomorrow, and she should not have stayed at her outward habitation, but as at another place, but have gone on after she came from Swarthmore. But she stayed some three or four dayes, and received a stone upon her foot, which doth much paine her, which she sees to be the just judgment of God upon her."‡

The lesson, if such it was, was not lost. Seven years later she was willing to leave home and friends to lead a forlorn hope in New England, where she proved herself a worthy companion of Elizabeth Hooton.

The first intimation of their purpose is found in an

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 80.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 617.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 234.

undated letter written from Bristol by one of the travelling preachers :

"Here is old Elizabeth Hooton of Skegby and Joan Brocksha of Darbshire waiting for passage to New England." *

The sentence is significant. Shortly after the expulsion of Mary Fisher from Boston a law had been passed which imposed a fine of £100 upon any captain who should knowingly convey a Quaker into that jurisdiction, and the consequent difficulty which the two women experienced in obtaining a passage would have broken a less determined purpose.

"At last," says Sewel, "they set sail towards Virginia, where they met with a ketch which carried them part of the way, and then they went the rest by land, and so at length came to Boston." †

Here again they encountered a law which forbade the entertainment of any Quaker by an inhabitant of Boston ; but a woman was found at last brave enough to receive them. Their first visit next day was to "that lion's den, Boston Prison." Instead of admitting them to see their friends, the gaoler carried them at once before Governor Endicott, through whose laws four Quaker martyrs had suffered death, and at whose sentence many Quaker women were even then being whipped at the cart's tail from town to town of New England. On March 14 of that year, 1661, William Leddra, a Cornish Quaker, had been hanged on Boston Common, and in these summer months Wenlock Christison, a Friend from Salem in New England, was lying in the gaol under sentence of death. The Governor received his unwelcome visitors without any show of legal courtesy. Calling them "witches," a word which had proved of ill omen to Mary Fisher before then, he demanded the cause of their coming.

* Bowden's "History," vol. i., p. 46.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 617.

It was given in the simple words of Scripture: "To do the will of Him that sent me." His next question brought Elizabeth Hooton her opportunity. "What do you understand by that will?" he asked. "To warn thee," she replied, "of shedding any more innocent blood?" At his boast that he would hang more yet, she quietly reminded him that he was in the hand of the Lord, who could take him away first, a prophecy which was fulfilled, as Sewel points out, before five years had passed.*

The two old women were committed to prison to the company of Wenlock Christison, now in hourly expectation of the gallows, and of twenty-four other Quakers. But Endicott had not been able to blind his eyes to the unpopularity of his murderous courses in the Colony, and he had been at pains to send an elaborate justification to the English Court after the execution of Mary Dyer. In the spring of 1661 some rumour of the King's displeasure, with which they were soon to be made acquainted, had reached the Boston magistrates. June 13 was the date fixed for the hanging of Wenlock Christison, but on the 12th of the month he and all his fellow-prisoners were set at liberty.

Elizabeth Hooton's release presented some strange features, and the story lost nothing in her vivid and detailed telling:

"They called another Jury, which condemned us all to be driven out of their jurisdiction by men and horses armed with swords and staffes and weapons of warre, who went alonge with us neere two days journey in the willdernes, and there they left us tuowards the night amongst the great rivers and many wild beasts yt useth to devoure and yt night we lay in the woods without any victualls but a fewe biskets yt we brought with us and which we soaked in the water."†

If Endicott expected that wild beasts and exposure would end the lives which had escaped his rope, his

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 618.

† Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 27.

scheme was disappointed. The two women came safely to Rhode Island, a colony whose religious freedom had earned it the name of the "Island of Errors," and from thence to Barbados, where they were amongst a large body of Friends and secure from persecution.

The only revenge which the Quakers permitted themselves was an immediate repetition of the offence for which they had suffered. Although these Englishwomen had delivered their message to the Governor of Boston, their conscience could not rest till they had made one more attempt to turn him from his cruelties. But this second effort proved even more barren of result. Sailing from Barbados to New England, they arrived in Boston, only to be promptly deported in a boat bound for Virginia. Now at last Elizabeth Hooton was "clear of that country" and free to return to England. But the voyage, as she wrote later, was a very dangerous one, nor did her troubles cease on her return.

With that instinct for time and place which seems to have been the prerogative of the persecutor, a neighbouring magistrate chose the season of harvest to summon her son from the field to the court-house, where he tendered him the oath. On his refusal to swear, he was fined £5. Three mares, his mother's property, together with their harness, were distrained as an equivalent for this sum, their true value being set down by their owner at £20. The cart which they had been in the act of drawing was left standing in the field laden with sheaves. But this was not the extent of the loss. The farm being robbed of its chief team, the horses which were left were worked perforce in that busy season beyond their strength, and some of them died. Thus handicapped, Elizabeth Hooton was glad in the end to sell her farm, though at the loss of nearly £100.

To add to these calamities, her unfortunate son was imprisoned for twelve weeks as a punishment for his continued refusal to take the oath.

"Soe that," as his mother points out in a letter to the King, "he gave satisfaction to the law by suffering the penalty of it, and yet they keep my goods contrary to the law—one bodye's goods for another bodye's fine."*

But she was not the woman to sit silent under the sense of injury. After pleading in vain for justice at the sessions in Leicestershire, she set out for London to lay her complaint before Charles II.

A letter dated 17.8 (October), 1662, gives a vivid picture of her adventures at the Court in the days when "citizens, countrymen, and watermen," might look at the King. The document is a most ingenuous page of self-revelation, written while the excitement of the "fine times" was still fresh upon her, and the sound of her own voice was still ringing in her ears.

"My goeing to London hath not beene for my owne ends, but in obedience to the will of God, for it was layed before me when I were on the sea, and in great danger of my life, that I should goe before the King, to witnesse for God, whether he would hear or noe, and to lay downe my life as I did at Boston if it bee required. And the Lord hath given me peace in my Journey, and God hath soe ordered that the takeing away of my Cattle hath beene very serviceable, for by that meanes have I had great priviledge to speake to the faces of the great men. They had noe wayes to cover their deceits nor send me to prison, whatsoever I said, because the oppression was layed before them: and there waited I for Justice and Judgment and equity from day to day.

"Soe did this oppression ring over all the Court and among the souldiers and many of the citisens and Countreymen and Watermen that were at the Whitehall, and I laboured amonge them both from morning till night. Both great men and priests and all sorts of people that there were.

"I followed the King with [MS. torn] this cry: I waite for justice of thee, O King, for [MS. torn] in the countrey I can have no justice among [MS. torn] the magistrates, nor sheriffs, nor Baylyes, for they have taken away my

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 7.

goods contrary to the law. Soe did I open the grievances of our Freinds, all over the Nation, the cry of the Innocent is great, for they have made Lawes to persecute Conscience. And I followed the King wheresoever he went with this Cry: The Cry of the Innocent regard. I followed him twice to the Tenace Court, and spoke to him when he went up into his coach, after he had been at his sport. And some of them read my Letters openly amongst the rest. The Kings Coachman read one of my letters aloud, and in some the Witsnesse of God was raised to beare witsnesse against the scoffers with boldnesse and courage, and confounded one of the Guard that did laugh, and stop the mouthes of the gainsayers and they cry they were my disciples, and soe great service there were for the Lord in these things.

“I waited upon the King which way soever he went—I mett him in the Parke, and gave him two letters, which he tooke at my hand: but the people murmured because I did not kneele, but I went along by the King and spoke as I went. But I could gett noe answer to my Letters, soe I waited for an answer many dayes, and watch for his goeing up into the Coach in the Court. And some souldiers began to be favourable to me, and soe let me speake to the King. And so the power of the Lord was raised in me, and I spoke freely to the King and Counsell, that I waited for justice, and looked for an answer of what I had given into his hand. And the power of the Lord was risen in me, and the witsnesse of God rose in many that did answer me, and some wicked ones said that it was of the devil. And some present made answer, and said, they wish they had that spirit. And then they said, they were my disciples, because they answered on truths behalfe. And the power of the Lord was over them all. And I had pretty time to speake what the Lord gave me to speake, till a souldier came and tooke me away, and said, It was the King’s Court, and I might not preach there. But I declared through both Courts as I went along, and they put me forth at the gates.

“And it came upon me to gett a coat of sackecloath, and it was plaine to me how I should have it. Soe we made that coat. And the next morning I were moved to goe amongst them again at Whitehall, in sackcloath and ashes. And the people was much strucken, both great

men and women was struken into silence. The witnesse of God was raised in many, and a fine time I had amongst them, till a souldier pulled me away, and said I should not preach there. But I was moved to speak all the way I went up to Westminster Hall, and through the Pallace yard, a great way of it, declaring against the Lawyers, that were unjust in their places, and warning all people to repent. Soe are they left without excuse, if they had never more spoken to them, but the Lord is fitting others for the same purpose."*

There is no mention in this letter of the plan which had begun to form in the writer's mind, of returning once more to Boston, this time, if possible, under the King's protection. She cherished the bold scheme of buying a house and land, even in the "Lions' Den" of Boston itself. It was to be her gift to the Quakers of New England—a perpetual meeting-house, and a house of entertainment for travelling preachers, that they might be no longer homeless through the inhospitable law. The land was to be for a burial-ground, a resting-place for those who had been, and still might be, put to death by the magistrates of Boston, "that they might not be buried under their gallows in the open fields, which did bring some shame over them."† When Charles II. learnt of her "sufficient circumstances," and of the expulsions which she had suffered on her first visit to Massachusetts, he readily granted her a certificate to settle in any of the British colonies—glad, perhaps, on his private account, to be rid of so importunate a suitor.

It seemed at first that the King's licence would be all-powerful, and that her plan, so generous and so fitly timed, would be allowed to take shape. Armed with the royal passport, she found no difficulty in obtaining a passage in a ship bound for Boston. Her daughter Elizabeth was her companion on this second venture, a

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 34.

† Works of Margaret Fell: "Letter to King Charles II.," pp. 32, 33.

proof, perhaps, of her confidence in its success, and her intention to settle in the house which she hoped to purchase, the sale of her farm having left her without a home in England. On their arrival at Boston, the authorities attempted to enforce their fine upon the captain, but the production of the King's signature put a stop to their demands. This was, however, the last shred of protection which the much-valued permit was able to afford.

The persecution of Quakers was proceeding in New England with unabated vigour, in the face of an express order sent over by the King in the previous year. So scant, indeed, was the respect shown by the colony to the Crown throughout this tragic story that one marvels how the inevitable rupture was delayed through the century which followed.

These travellers under the royal protection were met at once on leaving the ship with the old difficulty of finding a night's lodging. As Margaret Fell wrote in an indignant letter to the King, "One Elizabeth Hooton, an Antient woman, being at Boston two nights, could not get a bed to lie in under 20 shillings a night, they having made a law yt whosoever entertaines a Quaker should pay 20 shillings." This was an ill augury for the success of the mission. Although the authorities dared not imprison a Quaker who bore so evident a sign of the royal favour, they refused her the right to purchase land in their territory. Four several applications could not move them from their decision, and they laughed at the threat of the King's displeasure. Disappointed and disheartened, as she may well have been, Elizabeth Hooton lingered in the inhospitable land, travelling in the northern districts of Massachusetts, and preaching from place to place. Her sufferings in Old England had been cruel enough, yet they were humane in comparison with the barbarities practised upon her in the land of the Pilgrim Fathers. Sewel's account of her adventures on leaving Boston make unbearably painful reading, and are but a sample

of the martyrdom which she and her unoffending daughter endured in the colony :

“Departing then, and passing through several places, she came to Cambridge and was thrust into a stinking dungeon, where there was nothing to lie down or sit on. Here they kept her two days and two nights, without affording her anything to eat or drink ; and because a certain man in compassion brought her a little milk, he was also cast into prison and fined five pounds. Being brought to the court, they ordered her to be sent out of their coasts, and to be whipped at three towns with ten stripes each. So at Cambridge she was tied to the whipping-post and lashed with ten stripes, with a three-stringed whip, with three knots at an end. At Watertown she had ten stripes more with willow rods : and to make up all, at Dedham, in a cold frosty morning, she received ten cruel lashes at a cart’s tail. And being thus beaten and torn, she was put on horse back, and carried many miles into the wilderness, and towards night they left her there, where were many wolves, bears, and other wild beasts, and many deep waters to pass through ; but being preserved by an invisible hand, she came in the morning into a town called Rehoboth, being neither weary nor faint : and from thence she went to Rhode Island, where, coming to her friends, she gave thanks to God, for having counted her worthy, and enabled her to suffer for His name’s sake, beyond what her age and sex, morally speaking, could otherwise have borne.”*

Her own explanation seemed to her both simple and adequate : “The love I bear to the souls of men makes me willing to undergo whatsoever can be inflicted on me.”†

Time and again she returned to Boston, only to suffer at the whipping-post or the cart’s tail ; and time and again she made her way back to Rhode Island “to refresh herself” from her wounds, and to gather strength for a new protest. She may have hoped that the death of Governor

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 618-620.

† “New England Judged,” p. 420, quoted in Bowden’s “History,” vol. i., p. 260.

Endicott would smooth the way for her long-defeated project, and that consent would now be granted for her purchase. Whether this was her motive or no, she was present in Boston at the funeral of her old persecutor in March, 1665. She was, however, unable to resist the opportunity of addressing the congregation thus assembled, pointing, there can be no doubt, the moral of his untimely death, and the only sequel to the ceremony was a fresh imprisonment in the familiar gaol of Boston.

After this disappointment, the project of buying property in the town, if, indeed, she had not long ceased to entertain it, was definitely abandoned. Her service in New England was drawing to its end. As she turned her face for the last time to her refuge in Rhode Island, her horse was taken from her, and the seventy intervening miles were travelled on foot. The mere catalogue of the sufferings which she bore in her body during these five years has grown too painful for modern reading. The persecutor and the persecuted were each sustained by the consciousness that they were doing God's work, and death was the only truce which could be made between them.

Some time before 1667 Elizabeth Hooton had returned to England; "since which," says Sewel, and his words are no less welcome than amazing, "I have several times seen her in good condition."* It is interesting to find that her son Samuel made some attempt to continue his mother's mission. He travelled in her footsteps up and down in New England, and reported great success in restoring order to a district depleted by persecution and rent by internal discord. He visited Boston, and escaped unharmed from a long interview with Governor Bellingham, Mary Fisher's judge of ten years before. "I had an old mother was here amongst you," so he told the justice, "and bore many of your stripes and much cruelty at your hands, and now shee is returned."†

■ Sewel, vol. i., p. 620.

† Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 80.

The next three years seem to have passed quietly for Elizabeth Hooton, varied by the occasional distraction of a visit to London, and a persistent if one-sided correspondence with the King. Her farewell letter, written probably on the eve of her departure from England, has something of the weight and pathos of a dying testament:

“KING CHARLES,—How oft have I come to thee in my old age, both for thy reformation and safety, and for the good of thy soule, and for justice and equity. Oh that thou would not give thy kingdome to ye papists nor thy strength to woemen, but give up thy kingdome to ye Lord God of heaven and earth, whose it is, and thy strength and power to Jesus Christ, who is Lord of Lords, and king of kings, and then thou wilt be more honourable then ever thou wast.”*

In 1670 the terrible persecution which resulted from the renewal of the Conventicle Act drew her finally to London, to work for the relief of the prisoners and to enlighten public opinion upon their sufferings. She was appointed in the following year by a London Meeting to be one of the Overseers of the Fleet Prison, to care for the imprisoned Quakers, and to supply their wants out of the General Fund. The appointment was never filled; it was made while she was upon the high seas, on that voyage to the West Indies from which she never returned to England. But the entry is valuable as a public recognition of her life-long interest in the poor prisoners, and a proof that at seventy-one she was not too old nor too feeble to undertake practical service on their behalf.

A letter written by Elizabeth Hooton to Margaret Fox in this year of 1670 throws some light on her attempts to influence the Parliament. The account of her free access to the House and her liberty of speech with the members makes startling reading in the light of recent events. Margaret Fox was imprisoned in Lancaster at the time,

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio iii. 57.

on a charge of Premunire, renewed at her son's instigation. Hannah Salter, mentioned in the letter as her intercessor with the King, had been singled out by Fox himself "to goe to ye Kinge and his Councell and to move ym for Margaretts liberty."*

"Hannah Salter hath been with the King and leighboured much in thy Cause and I have been pretty much with the Parliment, and have given them pretty many bookes, and spoken pretty much to them. We have given the Parliment above 200 of the Reighnment of Popery, besides many other good bookes, I believe to the worth of £20. And they tooke them very well, but what they will doe to us more I know not.

"I have a great desier to see thee—if thou could but come to thy husband before he go, so the Lord give thee some liberty, that thou may see him, and it would make my heart glad.†

"I know nothing but I may goe with him. It hath been much on mee to goe a great while, and to doe the best that is required for him. One letter have I written to thy son's wife [on the burning question of his responsibility for his mother's imprisonment], and I desier thou may see it over, for it were much on me to write it. And so at present I have no more but my Love . . . for I am in hast to goe up again to the Parlement . . . Hannah Salter hath some hopes that thy businesse will be effected. Shee would not leave the King till he had granted what was required, and his counscill with him promised her that it should be done. So shee goes to him againe the second day to have it written and sealed—soe I hope it will be done in God's tyme."‡

The petition was successful, and Margaret Fox's discharge was sent down into the country. She hurried to London, arriving in time to say good-bye to her husband on his departure for the West Indies.

It was little more than fifty years since Raleigh and Grenville had discovered the mainland of New England

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 169.

† This abrupt change of subject refers to the project which Fox had begun to entertain of visiting the West Indies.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 152.

"to be the goodliest soil under the cope of heaven," and Shakespeare, catching fire from the stories of homecoming sailors, had set the scenes of his last play amid the magic of the "still-vex'd Bermoothes." The capture of Jamaica in 1655 by Admiral Penn, William Penn's father, revived the interest of men of the Commonwealth in the British West Indies. It was in the same year that the Quaker message first reached Barbados through the two women Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, and since that date the islands had proved a constant attraction to missionary Friends. Again and again the Swarthmoor letters reveal the drawings of some would-be evangelist to the West Indies, or, as they expressed it, "a moshon to Barbados."

The intelligent interest which Fox took in the life of a colony so remote from the range of his own experience is proved by a letter which he wrote as early as 1657 to "Friends beyond the Sea, that have Blacks and Indian Slaves." In 1671, when the heat of the persecution in England was abating, and he "began to arise out of his sufferings," his mind turned again to this distant Quaker Church. He had already visited Scotland and Ireland, and now, undismayed by the voyage, he set his face towards the New World. Twelve prominent Friends, one of whom was Elizabeth Hooton, offered to bear him company, and on August 12 he embarked at Wapping.

John Hull, the youngest of the party, kept the diary of the voyage. It has been printed in the second volume of Fox's Journal, and is the quaintest and most vivid of sea-tales. But in all his record of the health and doings of the passengers, their perils from pirates and dangers of drowning, the presence of Elizabeth Hooton and her one woman companion is passed over in silence.

On the night of October 3, seven weeks from the date of their sailing from England, the Friends set foot upon Barbados. Here they remained for three months, while Fox followed up his early epistle by preaching to the negroes

and addressing their masters on the treatment and instruction of slaves. He set himself, besides, to restore order into the chaotic affairs of Quakerism in the island, sparing no trouble in his directions for the registering of marriages, births, and deaths, and for the management of other details with which his long experience in England had made him familiar. The Governor received him kindly, and, following the cue thus given, the great men of the island, "Colonels, Justices, Judges, and Captains" flocked to his General Meetings, which were the largest ever held in Barbados. On January 8, 1672, he set out for Jamaica with Elizabeth Hooton and three of his men followers.

Jamaica had been a centre of Quakerism since the year 1658, though at the time of Fox's visit the cause was languishing, and he found but one meeting upon the island. James Lancaster had preceded him with a companion, only to find his work undermined through the opposition of a woman-preacher. Jane Stokes, who was characterized by Friends as "a very bad spirit indeed," had been active in bringing about the doubtful blessing of the disloyal missionary Perrot's return to England, and she seems to have imbibed much of his spirit of contradiction. Fox's coming, however, was like a breath of new life to his followers and to the island as a whole. "Jane Stokes," he records, "is come in finely, and hath given a paper of condemnation." Seven meetings were established up and down in Jamaica, and a Men's and Women's Meeting set up without opposition. The visit lasted seven weeks, and then George Fox set sail once more for Maryland.*

But this time his faithful companion could no longer accompany and care for him. A letter from William Edmundson to Margaret Fox records: "Wee buired Els: Hutton in Jamica about a week after wee landed ther." The long voyage from England, with its extremes of fierce

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., pp. 176-207.

gales and fiercer heat, would have tried the strength of a younger woman, while the excitement of revisiting the familiar scenes, so closely connected with the cruel sufferings of ten years before, had proved too great for her endurance. Fox's account of her death is scarcely less bald than that of his companion :

"Elizabeth Hootton is deceased at Jamaicae . . . and Elizabeth was well upon the sixth day of the week and deceased the next day being 7th day about the 11th houre in peace like a lamb. James Lancaster was by her and can give an account what words she spoke and of her testimony concerneing Truth a farther account I shall give concerneing her outward things to her Relations but let her Sonne Oliver gather up all her papers and her sufferings and send them to London that her life and death may bee printed and Wenlock Christoson hath given forth a paper of Condemnation concerneing things that you know of and soe things are generally well beyond all words or writeing either."*

It is not known whether this project of a printed biography was ever carried out. No Life of Elizabeth Hootton is known to exist, but there are references here and there in Friends' letters to a document called "Oliver Hutton's hystry." This "Sonne Oliver" was evidently in England at the time of his mother's death, but, like his brother, he was attracted a few years later to the scene of her sufferings. In 1682 he was writing an intimate letter to Fox from Barbados, warning him of the danger of false flatterers, a theme reminiscent of his mother's love of simple speech.

The indifference which seems to lurk behind the short obituary written by Fox strikes us at first somewhat painfully, knowing as we do the long friendship which had existed between him and his earliest convert, and the motives which had led her to this heroic and fatal journey. It is probable, however, that her peculiar

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 213, and note on p. 436.

devotion was never suspected by him, and the business-like tone of her letters gave no hint of the love which prompted them. For her it was "well beyond all words or writing either": she need fear no more the rod of the persecutor, the loss of her goods, or the cruel walls of a prison. The practical care which Fox shows for her memory is sufficient to refute the charge of callousness. To him she is but a weary soldier who has fallen at her post. The fight is too fierce and the time too short for regrets or for selfish sorrow; the ranks close up, and the army marches forward.

CHAPTER III

MARGARET FELL, THE "NURSING-MOTHER" OF QUAKERISM

THE rapid growth of Quakerism dates from Fox's release from the House of Correction at Derby. During 1651 and 1652 he was travelling through Yorkshire and the Dales into Westmorland, leaving behind him groups of "Children of the Light"—men and women who felt the call to spread the message which they had received. At one open-air meeting near Preston Patrick, a great body of "Seekers," numbering more than a thousand, accepted, in company with the clergyman of their parish, the message for which their hearts had been waiting. Regular meetings began to be organized in the houses of these converts, which formed the training-ground for the preachers who were to evangelize the South. Others accompanied Fox on his further journeys, or followed him, explaining and confirming the work which he had begun.

These earliest Quaker preachers were for the most part young and enthusiastic, steeped in the Scriptures, and versed in the intricacies of current doctrine. Their message was clear to those who were putting their trust in outward observances and negations.

"I saw," says one typical woman preacher, "that if I found not Christ in me, as neare and as willing to deliver me as the Devill was to destroy me, I should never be saved, so I returned into the silence out of all babling talke: and so my mind came to be staid there in the power of that spirit to lead and teach me, which was convincer in

my conscience . . . the true Teacher, which could never be removed into a corner."*

This was not a message which could appeal to the careless and irreligious, and, indeed, there were but few of these in the England of Cromwell's day, where religious freedom had been so newly and so dearly won. Rather as William Sewel puts it in his clear, dignified sentences: Fox "declared to the Professors . . . the doctrine which now he firmly believed to be truth; and some were convinced, so as to receive the inward divine teaching of the Lord and take that for their rule. This, by what I can find, was the first beginning of George Fox's preaching: which, as I have been credibly informed, in those early years consisted chiefly of some few but powerful and piercing words, to those whose hearts were in some measure prepared to be capable of receiving this doctrine."†

It was at this stage in the history of Quakerism that he paid that first visit to Swarthmoor Hall, which was to have such momentous consequences both for himself and for the Church which he had begun to found. His arrival seems to have been quite casual and unpremeditated. Judge Fell, the master of the house, was absent in London. Margaret Fell, the mistress, was herself not at home, and did not return until evening. It is a remarkable confirmation of her repute as the friend of travelling preachers that Fox and his companion should have taken up their quarters at Swarthmoor in her absence. Before her return they had put her friend the parish priest to flight, after a discussion more distinguished by plain language than by courtesy.

Margaret Fell in this year of 1652 was a woman of thirty-eight and the mother of seven children. The daughter of a country gentleman, she had been married

* "The Just and Equall Ballance Discovered," by Sarah Black-borrow, p. 8. 1660.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 24.

at seventeen to a husband nearly twice her age. But the marriage was a singularly happy one. Judge Fell, as his wife records, was a man widely known and respected by all sorts of people, both for his private virtues and for his services to the county as member of the Long Parliament and Judge of Assize. He was "one that sought after God in the best way that was made known to him." His conduct shows him to have been a fair-minded man, and open to reason. With his wife his dealings were marked by a complete confidence and generosity. She herself, as she confesses, had been seeking, during the twenty years of her marriage, after "the best things." Like Fox in the early days of his religious struggle, she would travel long distances to hear the "best ministers," and she kept open house for the "Lecturing Ministers," who frequently held services at Swarthmoor. But their teaching had failed to satisfy her, and the rumours of Fox's unconventional ministry roused her hopes and stirred her imagination. "Margarett fell," so he notes in his Journal, "had a vision off a man in a white hatt yt shoulde come and confounde ye preists before my comeinge into those parts and a great dreade there was amongst ye preists and professors concerninge ye man in leather breeches."

With the ground thus prepared for his coming, Fox found it an easy matter to soothe her resentment at his "confounding of Priest Lampit," and when next day the unhappy Vicar returned to the attack, she was a witness of their encounter. Fox relates the sequel in a couple of lines: "Margarett fell soone then discerned ye preist cleerely, and a convincement came upon her and her family of ye Lords truth." Before the week was over she had given public evidence of this convincement, and her last appearance as a worshipper in her parish church was signalized by a protest against Fox's ejection from it by the constable.*

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., pp. 48, 52.

But it was no light sacrifice for a woman of Margaret Fell's upbringing and position in the county to throw in her lot with the Quakers, and it was only with tears and a bitter struggle that her way was made clear to her. A family which accepted this message must say farewell to corporate life, to comfort and riches and the esteem of neighbours. Fox's own life was a copy of his Master's, who had loved His Father's business better than the ties of home and friends, and went about doing good and healing all who were afflicted. It was fitting that his followers should tread in the steps of the primitive evangelists. They went out two by two, not knowing whither they went; they were imprisoned, reviled, persecuted; outcasts from their families and strangers to the joys of home, of wife, and of children. If their common faith knit their hearts more closely, it drove them asunder, as the quaint phrase ran, "in their outward being"—in prisons, or on the British highways, or far and wide across the seas. The family at Swarthmoor could not hope to escape the fate of their humbler fellows. Of the seven daughters of the house, three became preachers, and all were married to prominent Quakers. There was not one but suffered the common lot of imprisonment or persecution. A couple of years after Fox's visit only three were left of the four members of the household who had been "convinced" with their mistress. Ann Clayton, the maid, joined the ranks of the women-preachers, and after suffering the usual penalty of imprisonment in England she carried the message as far as Barbados. Thomas Salthouse, the steward, also felt the call to preach, and became the Apostle of the West of England. Young Will Caton, the companion of the son of the house, gave up the college career to which Judge Fell had destined him, and, after travels and imprisonments in England and Scotland, he passed the remainder of his short life in Holland, one of the principal planters of Quakerism in that country. George, the only son, alone

of all the household rejected the message, and lived to become his mother's most bitter opponent.

Some fairly definite foreknowledge of coming sorrows must have passed through the mind of Margaret Fell in the lonely days that lay between the farewell of George Fox and the homecoming of her husband. The very children, troubled at her preoccupation, and awed by the strangeness of this overwhelming influence, "were all quiet and still and grown sober, and could not play on their music that they were learning." As the Judge came riding home across the sands, he was met by a party of neighbours, eager to bring him the first news of the Quakers' visit, which had bewitched his wife and children.

Refusing to condemn them on hearsay, he arrived at Swarthmoor puzzled and silent. But an interview with two of the Quaker preachers, and, in the evening, a discourse from George Fox, dispelled his doubts as to the honesty of their convictions. Although he never relinquished his membership of the parish church, the protection which he began to extend to the infant Society was of inestimable value at the critical time of the laying of its foundations. In Fox's words, he was "a wall to the believers." The hall of Swarthmoor became, with his sanction, the meeting-house for the district. As long as he lived, the great respect in which he was held in the North of England quelled the violence of the persecution, which might otherwise have crushed or scattered the Quakers by imprisonment, fines, and banishment.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of Margaret Fell's "convincement." Of a higher rank than the majority of her fellow-believers, she assumed at once a position of responsibility and authority. Her power of organization showed itself very early in the establishment of a Fund for the Service of Truth, which made it possible for poor travelling preachers to continue their labours. It relieved their sufferings in prison, pro-

vided them with ready money, with clothes and with books, and paid their passage to distant countries. All accounts were rendered to Margaret Fell, and she was herself the largest and most constant contributor. Not content with this, she entertained at her own house those who were travelling in the neighbourhood, giving hospitality to Friends from five or six counties at once. She cared for the wives and children of travelling preachers, and cheered them on their journeys or in prison with reports of their families' well-being.

Before the appointment of any governing body, Margaret Fell, in conjunction with Fox, formed the ultimate court of appeal in all matters of conduct; and even after the establishment of the Men's and Women's Meetings, her letters to Friends had the weight and authority of an apostolic epistle. The letters which she received give some indication of her place in the heart of the suffering Church. Ellis Hookes, the first recording clerk or salaried secretary of the early Friends, assures her, in the midst of his careful report of his work: "I am never satisfied but when I am sure I am in that which will be justifiable before thee." An Irishwoman, evidently a stranger, presents herself at Swarthmoor with no doubt of her welcome:

"I was commanded by the Lord," she writes, "to come to this nation these words were said to mee Goe to thy two sisters in England but first pass to Margrett ffells where thou shalt increase and grow in the Truth, for I have much service for thee at thy return. . . . Therefore was thou sent to her (said God) that the seed which I have raised in thee might be strengthened and thou fitted for the work."*

There is an early letter from Thomas Holme, the excitable Apostle of South Wales, whose praises, exaggerated to the verge of blasphemy, yet hold a grain of truth in each epithet. Phrases which are now considered

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 138.

applicable to the Deity alone were of frequent occurrence in letters addressed to Margaret Fell and to George Fox, whose calm good sense led him to draw a pencil through them on perusal.

“A nursing mother thou art who feeds the hungrey with good things, but the fat with judgment, who kiles and slayes the liveinge and raises the dead. Judgment is comited into thy hands and Judgment thou gives to whom judgment belongs and marcy to whom marcy belongs. Power in heven and in earth is given unto thee, thou glorious daughter of Sion.”*

It is sad to relate that personal experience of Margaret Fell's authority led Thomas Holme to reconsider his verdict. A couple of years later he and his young wife had come under her displeasure, and he writes to Margaret Fell to defend his companion, after a long course of advice and reproof: “Thou might let her alone—she suffereth all and replyes not again—the Lord judg betwixt you.” But scarcely were the words written than the habit of reverence reasserted itself: “Have I dishonoured thee herein? Ney, I love thee the more—forgive me, I pray thee.”

But it was natural that her supremacy should not go altogether unchallenged. As early as 1654, James Nayler, who was to cause the first great rift in the Quaker Church by his aspirations to Messiahship, was writing to “Judge Fell's Wife,” to reprove her for presumption. There are indications that her continued wearing of the dress suitable to her rank and position was not looked on favourably by her humbler sisters. A curious account was given to Secretary Thurloe, in 1658, of a Scotch Quaker woman, whose first undertaking after her conviction was a pilgrimage to Swarthmoor, with the object, apparently, of reproving Margaret Fell, “who . . . they say . . . is one that is past the cloud, and hath liberty to wear satins and silver and gold lace, and is a great gallant.”† Ten

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 196, 197.

† Quoted, Braithwaite, p. 364.

years later an attempt was made to dissuade one of her would-be sons-in-law from his marriage with Mary Fell, on the ground that she and her sister dressed with "naked necks and costly array." The accusation, if so it may be called, seems to have been well founded. The last letter which Margaret wrote "To Friends," under the date 1698, was a protest from a woman of more than eighty years of age against the dangerous practice of leading young Friends much

"into the observation of outward things . . . for they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians. . . . We must all be in one dress and one colour. This is a silly poor gospel . . . wherever I saw it appear I have stood against it for several year."*

But it is clear that whatever jealousies and misunderstandings may have arisen during the fifty years of her service to the Quaker Church, they were but transient and superficial: they could not live in the presence of the love and self-sacrifice of one whom they all knew to be their fellow-sufferer. A letter from Thomas Salthouse, who had been the steward at Swarthmoor, is typical in its outspoken affection and reverence of hundreds which may still be read in the crabbed half-German script of the seventeenth century:

"I am persuaded thou knows my afecion and subjection unto thee and that I love thee with a perfect love for all that I can expres had I the tongue of men and angels weare not superflios to set forth thy virtus and graces and wisdom wherewith thou art filed, fited and furnished for service of such weighty and publique concernment as thou art caled unto and found faithfull in."†

This "service of publique concernment" was indeed of the greatest moment to the whole body of Quakers. Margaret Fell's vast correspondence gave her an intimate

* Works of Margaret Fell, p. 534. London, 1710. And more fully in MSS. at Devonshire House, Portfolio xxv. 66.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 164.

acquaintance with every detail of the Friends' activity and persecution. Accounts of cruelty and oppression reached Swarthmoor by every carrier, while the encouragement and relief of sufferers formed the burden of her replies. But the responsibility of her unique knowledge entailed a more active effort. Judge Fell's position in the county gave his wife an influence with Parliament and Court which she never hesitated to employ. During the thirty years of persecution which followed her conviction she was the Friends' advocate and intercessor with the Government, sparing neither money nor time in their service, and even offering her own life as a pledge of their peaceable behaviour. She had written four times to Cromwell, remonstrating with him for his hypocrisy in advocating liberty of conscience and yet permitting the persecution of the Quakers. She reminded him in the plainest terms of his "vows and promises" and of his great victories and preservations, whose sole "intent and end" had been that religious freedom which was now denied to his subjects. During the lifetime of Judge Fell, which coincided with that of the Protector, the meetings at Swarthmoor were held in comparative safety. After his death the enemies of the little Church were free to work their will. In the spring of 1660, when Fox had been arrested and taken to prison from under her own roof, Margaret Fell's indignation could not be satisfied with distant correspondence. She wrote first an "Information" "To all Magistrates, concerning the wrong taking up and imprisoning of George Fox at Lancaster." Its unusually short and clear sentences are dictated by the very spirit of outraged justice.* She then set out for London, burdened not only with the wrongs of her dear friend and leader, but with the sufferings of all the people of God, who, as she wrote in a tragic catalogue, were

"some persecuted and prisoned till Death, others their Bodies bruised till Death, stigmatized, bored thorow the

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 459.

Tongue, gagged in the Mouth, stock'd, and whip'd thorow Towns and cities our Goods spoiled, our Bodies two or three Years imprisoned, with much more that might be said, which is well known to the Actors thereof."

Margaret's companion on this her first visit to London was Anne Curtis, daughter of that Sheriff Yeamans, of Bristol, who had been hanged before his own door for his loyalty to King Charles I. A letter sent from "M. ff to gff at lankster in preson 1660" has been preserved by Fox in his Journal, and portrays better than any modern comment the cross-currents of influence that played around the new King.

"My deare love and life everlasting, ye last 7 day Ann Curtiss came Hither Aboute ye 11 houre and I went with her to White Hall, and Brought her to ye King, And Shee made know to him whose Daughter shee was and how yt her ffather was executed for him or in his ffathers cause where upon hee showed much love to her, And shee said shee had a request to Him, hee axed her what it was, shee said shee had a deare freind in Lancaster Castle whom shee had been to see and shee desired her persone Might bee accepted for his or else yt hee might bee Brought up with his accusers to before him, and hee might be Judg in ye cause, and hee gave command to his Secretary to Issue forth an order to yt purposs, but ye subtilty of ye Secretary gave out order to ye Judge to bee brought up by Horposs scorpions [Habeas Corpus!] and to apeare before ye Judges, soe yt shee was disapointed of her request to him and of what hee had granted . . . wee was with ye King this day about it and hee appointed us to come to Morrow soe what ye effecte will bee wee know not, ye prisbiterion party is exceeding Mad yt hee should admitt us soe to come to him and in any measure hearken to us, and I doe beleeeve doth insence him yt if hee answer our desires ye whole Nation will be against him, but ye Man is Moderate and I doe beleeeve hath an intent in his mind and a desire to doe for freinds if he knew how and not to indanger his own safty, hee is darke and Ignorant of god and soe any thing feares him but wee have gotten a place in his heart yt hee doth beleeeve

wee will bee true to him and soe doth many of his own party."*

The petition was successful, and a warrant was sent down to Lancaster for the release of George Fox. But Margaret Fell's mission in London was not yet accomplished. It was her further purpose not only to obtain the freedom of the 700 Quakers who were then in prison, but to explain their doctrines to the King and to all in authority, confident that their persecution would cease automatically when their innocence was made clear. Her epistles were addressed to every member of the Royal Family, including the Princess of Orange and the Queen of Bohemia, whose traditions might be supposed to be on the side of religious liberty. She dealt in her letters with the burning question of Tithes and the taking of Oaths, and having thus prepared the way, she besought the King to sanction a debate in his presence between some of the Quaker preachers and the Bishops of the Church of England. The King had agreed to the meeting, but the clergy at the last moment obtained its postponement, and in the excitement of the Fifth Monarchy Rising, and the consequent suspicion which fell upon the Friends, the scheme was allowed to drop. This was a bitter disappointment to Margaret Fell, who had unlimited confidence in the strength of her cause and the debating powers of its supporters. Six years later she attempted to supply the place of this debate by a curious pamphlet, entitled "A Touch-stone: or, a Tryal by the Scriptures, of the Priests, Bishops, and Ministers, etc." She throws down the gauntlet in a spirited opening paragraph:

"Methinks I hear the Bishops mutter, murmur, and contemn, that I should publish it out to the World, how I desired the King (at the beginning of his Reign) to beware of their Counsels; therefore I do hereby give them my Reasons of the Cause why I did so."

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 372.

After a general indictment which was scarcely calculated to allay their resentment, she proceeds to attack them in detail, and to prove that the "Bishops, as they are called, and those of their order and coat," are in no sense the legitimate successors of Christ and His apostles. She develops this theme in the leisurely manner common to her time, through 116 closely reasoned pages, dealing destruction as she advances upon

"1st their Titles. 2nd their Estate or Condition and Qualifications. 3rd Their Call. 4th Their Doctrine and Worship. 5th Their Practice in Matters of Controversie" [a sore point, for what they would not do by argument, "they agreed with others to do it for them by compulsion"]. "6th Their Maintenance. 7th and lastly Their Garb and Habit."*

The pamphlet is interesting for its evidence of Margaret Fell's passion for theology, as well as of her clear logical mind; it may also enable the modern reader to grasp without difficulty the motives which moved Charles II. to allow the debate to fall through.

In spite of this temporary check, the chief end of her mission had been accomplished, and an order for the release of the Quaker prisoners had actually been signed by the King and Council, when the discovery of the Fifth Monarchy Plot involved the Friends in a more bitter persecution than had yet overtaken them. Thousands were thrown into prison during the panic which followed the arrest of the leaders, for now, as at many subsequent dates, the Quakers' habit of holding private meetings laid them open to the suspicion of hatching "privy conspiracy and rebellion." It was with great difficulty that Margaret cleared her friends of complicity in the rising. Time and again she went to plead with the King, bearing the news of fresh imprisonments and the rifling of Quaker houses. A declaration was drawn up by Fox "against plotts and fightinges," which was printed and sent to the King and

* Works of Margaret Fell, p. 351.

Council, while other copies were sold through the streets of London and at the Exchange. This peaceable Confession of Faith "cleered ye ayre," as Fox expresses it, "and layde the darknesse." After the execution of the Fifth Monarchy Men Charles ordered the release of all suspected Quakers, without payment of fees.

So ended the fifteen months of Margaret Fell's "service" in London. Ten times in her long life did she make the journey to the capital, but these visits do not exhaust the catalogue of her travels on the Friends' behalf. In 1663 she travelled a thousand miles through England, for the most part on horseback, visiting their meetings, and cheering them with the presence which so many of them had longed for. Most of them were already well known to her through their letters or the report of others, but now she spoke with them and, being herself a preacher of considerable force and eloquence, exhorted them face to face. Five years later, fresh from her own imprisonment, she undertook to visit the Friends who were scattered up and down through the prisons of England.

But meanwhile she had herself passed through the experience which enabled her to sympathize completely with those whom she delighted to call "My dear Lambs," and gave her the right to name herself "Your dear Friend, that is one with you in all your sufferings."

The story of Margaret Fell's trial under the Quaker Act, and her commitment to Lancaster Gaol, in the winter of 1663-64, is familiar to all readers of Quaker history. She was found guilty of refusing the Oath of Allegiance, and condemned to life-long imprisonment, and the loss of all her property. This dreaded "Condemnation under Premunire" was equivalent to a sentence of outlawry, and placed the condemned person "out of the King's protection." An example of its working may be found in the case of the Quaker prisoner cited by Sewel, who appealed to his judge for the removal of the irons which the gaoler had put on him. "Nay," said the judge, "the gaoler may

do what he will with thee, seeing thou art out of the King's protection."

It was a new and uncomfortable experience for Judge Turner to see the neighbour who had lived near by him, familiar and respected, for thirty years, brought to his bar to receive her sentence of outlawry, and her outspoken bravery did not lessen the difficulty of his task. Once she had declared her loyalty to the King, and her conscientious objections to expressing the same by an oath, she complained neither of her position, nor of her sentence. She was troubled rather for the "old ancient men," "known to be honest men in the country where they live," who shared her imprisonment, and had been lying night after night on the bare boards in a cold room. As in later days, the commitment of a delicately nurtured woman to prison threw a flood of light upon prison methods and accommodation. But her representations, though they aroused a mild theoretical sympathy in the judge, were powerless to effect a reform. In the plainest words she set before him the consequences of his conduct in condemning the innocent, insisting on a thought which was frequently in her mind: that the machinery of the law might be more profitably employed in searching out and punishing the evil-doers. "You have work enough besides, if you do not meddle with the Innocent and them that fear the Lord." It is the same thought which inspired her last words as she was led out of the judgment hall to prison—words which breathe the heroic defiance of the martyrs of all ages. "Although I am out of the King's protection, I am not out of the protection of the Almighty God."*

The four and a half years, which were all that she served of her life-sentence, were not passed in idleness. The volume known as "Margaret Fell's Works," which was published after her death, is made up for the most part of letters and treatises composed during this period.

* Works of Margaret Fell, pp. 287, 288.

Here are "Addresses to the Magistrates and People of England"; "To the Flock of God"; "To all Friends, Prisoners at London, and Bristol and elsewhere."

A sense of the wicked futility and waste of this legalized persecution was always present with her. Herself the head of a great household and a landowner, she wrote to

"the King and his Privy Council who profess Christianity: what do you think will become of this Nation, if you continue and go on, to take so many Thousands of poor Husbands and Tradesmen from their Husbandry and Callings, now in this Season of the Year, when they should Plow and Sow their Ground to maintain their Families?"*

To the King himself she wrote rather in the tone of an injured friend than of a criminal and outlaw. She reminded him of his Declaration for Freedom of Conscience given at Breda. She called to his mind her frequent interviews with him, and the intimate knowledge he had gained of the innocent practices of the Quakers. She reminded him of the advice she had given him not to hearken to the Bishops, "for it was their counsel was the Ruine of thy Father"; and how, in a curious flash of insight, she had warned him "to beware how thou Rulest in this Nation, for the People of this Nation was a brittle People generally." Writing as she was in the days of the Great Plague, she concluded with an appeal to the King to try what might be the effect of keeping his covenant with God's people, since he had at his door so clear an evidence of God's displeasure at the breach of it.† Certainly, in spite of the verdict of history, the disasters of the reign of Charles II. were not due to the absence of faithful advisers.

It is from the same letter that we can obtain the only indication of the nature of Margaret Fell's confinement. After recapitulating her letters and her interviews with

* Works of Margaret Fell, pp. 28, 29.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 325-330.

the King, she continues with a dramatic effect which was probably unconscious :

“For which of these things hast thou kept me in Prison three long Winters, in a place not fit for People to lie in : sometime for Wind and Storm and Rain and sometime for Smoke : so that it is much that I am alive, but that the Power and Goodness of God hath been with me.”

Then follows a passage which affords interesting evidence of the laxness of discipline in the prisons, and the unlimited discretion which reposed in the sheriff :

“I was kept a Year and Seven Months in this Prison before I was suffered to see the House that was mine, or Children, or Family, except they came to me over two dangerous Sands in the cold Winter, when they came with much danger of their Lives : but since the last Assizes I have had a little more respect from this Sheriff than formerly from others. And in all this I am very well satisfied : and praises the Lord who counts me worthy to suffer for his sake.”

Through the intercession of her daughters, to whom the King showed himself “very loving,” and probably also through the intervention of her husband’s friends, Margaret Fell was set at liberty in the summer of 1668, without the loss of her property. The first use she made of her freedom was to visit the gaols of England, to see and comfort the Quaker prisoners, and to obtain what alleviation she could for the sufferings with which she was now too well acquainted. The journey ended with her marriage to George Fox at Bristol in 1669.

This step had long been contemplated between them, but, as Fox relates, he had not previously “received a command from the Lord for the accomplishment of it.” He seems to have felt that his continued celibacy, together with his intimate friendship with the widow of Judge Fell, was giving colour to the report that he was an enemy of

all marriage. His own explanation is a characteristic mixture of common sense and mysticism :

“An auncient puritan said unto mee hee hearde I was marryed and askt mee ye reason: and I tolde him as a testimony yt all might come uppe Into ye mariage as was in ye beginninge: and as a testimony yt all might come uppe out of ye wilderness to ye mariage of ye lamb.”*

These reasons were doubtless conclusive to the bride and bridegroom, though from a human standpoint the ceremony made so little change in the lives of either, that one is tempted to think it might as well have been omitted. Two happy years of comparative rest were the longest period of their living together, and were set in the midst of sixteen years of almost complete separation. Of outward advantage there was none to either. Fox's scrupulousness was such that he would not enter upon the marriage without the consent of all Margaret Fell's daughters, and an assurance from their own lips that none of them would be losers by their mother's second marriage. Margaret Fell, on her part, roused the indignation of her only son by what he must have regarded as a disgraceful *mésalliance*, and brought upon herself the bitterest sorrow of her life, in an imprisonment renewed at his instigation. This second imprisonment on the old charge was cut short by the King's intervention, and she was released at the end of a year, in time to bid her husband farewell on his voyage to America.

Margaret's testimony to George Fox, written after his death, brings out clearly the difficulties of their ménage. Swarthmoor was too far from London to be a suitable dwelling for Fox, while its mistress was tied to it both through her household and family and through the care of the Quaker Society in the North of England, of which she was the acknowledged leader. It seems that their living apart had aroused unfriendly criticism, and she is at

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 154.

pains to provide a quaint explanation of her readiness to join her husband in various parts of the country, "for taking away all occasion of evil thoughts."

Never were evil thoughts more ill founded than those which suggested a lack of sympathy between this sorely tried husband and wife. Their letters to each other breathe the most perfect love and confidence, nor is the playful touch altogether absent, which can only be born of complete understanding. There is no stronger evidence needed of their unclouded relations than the joyous acceptance of George Fox by Margaret Fell's daughters and their husbands, who henceforth called him by the simple name of father. His various companions on his journeys were careful to send his wife the most minute particulars of his health and occupations.

While Fox's activities took him after his marriage through the length and breadth of England, to Barbados and to Maryland, Margaret was moved to go herself to London, to see the King, as she believed, for the last time. She had suffered further persecution, both by fines and distraint, on account of the meetings at Swarthmoor. The temper of petitioner and King alike had changed at this visit. Repeated disappointment had dashed Margaret's hope, and her letter to the King was written rather with the object of clearing her own conscience than with any expectation of redress. Charles himself, no longer "very loving," was "so rough and angry that he would not take my paper." She lingered in London for a couple of weeks, encouraged by a promise of help from Judge Jeffries, whose heart was not yet so hard that it could not be moved by a tale of suffering. But Charles II. had given his last audience to his Quaker subjects.

"We came forth into White-Hall-Court again: but all the Gates were shut that we could not get forth. So we waited and walked up and down, and several came down from the King, and said, He could not stand: others said: He could not speak. Then, after some Hours

waiting, we got through Scotland-Yard, and came away : and the King continued Sick and Ill until the Sixth Day after, and then he died. So this confirmed that Word, which God put into my Heart, That I was sent to bear my last Testimony to the King." *

Some attempt was made to renew the persecution after the death of Charles II., but a proclamation of the new King released all Quaker prisoners, and the accession of William III., three years later, marked the beginning of a new era of religious liberty. In 1686 George Fox, who had refused himself to benefit by his wife's fortune, gave a site out of her land to build a Meeting-House at Swarthmoor, "to be for the Lord's service to the end of the world." For two hundred years of that time allotted, the house has fulfilled its purpose: it stands to-day as it did then, a plain square building, as unlike as might be to the discredited "steeple-house." It has a neat paved approach, as George Fox willed it, "that Friends may go dry to Meeting," and over the door a little slab bears the inscription: "Ex Dono: G. F. 1688."

Fox's work was almost done. In 1690 his wife, then in her seventy-sixth year, travelled for the ninth time to London to see him. The visit was the happiest she had ever spent. Friends were "in much love and peace," and her husband apparently stronger and better in health than she had seen him for long. When she left him to return to Swarthmoor, it was with no foreboding of the blow that was so soon to fall. Fox died in London almost without warning on January 13, 1691, leaving his followers stunned by the suddenness and greatness of their loss. "Surely," wrote William Penn, "it portends to us great evils to come. A Prince indeed is fallen in Israel to-day."† But Fox had lived long enough to see the end of "great evils." With the Revolution of 1688 a new page had been turned in the history of the community which he had

* Works of Margaret Fell, pp. 10-12.

† MSS. in Devonshire House, Portfolio xvii. 100.

founded. It had proved itself stanch and unconquerable in the face of persecution: now the task lay before it of winning the victories of peace.

Margaret Fox lived for ten years longer in her northern home, surrounded by the love of children and grandchildren. She was keenly interested in the editing and publishing of Fox's Journal. Her Epistle to Friends, written at the age of eighty-four, seven years after the death of her husband, shows a recollection undimmed by old age, and a love and respect for his memory unshaken by the passage of years.

"He that early brought unto us the Glad Tidings of the Gospel of Peace, he continued in the Body amongst God's Plantation up and down, Forty Years: and we had from him certain Directions and Instructions upon many weighty Accounts and Occasions: he hath left us several Writings and Records to be practised according to the Gospel which he preached amongst us, and we have lived under the Teaching of that blessed Eternal Spirit of the Eternal God which he directed us to, unto this day. And now it is good for us all to go on and continue hand in hand, in the Unity and Fellowship of this Eternal Spirit, in Humility and Lowliness of Mind, each esteeming others better than our selves. And this is well-pleasing unto God."*

She never lost her concern in public events, but continued to act in some sort as the official mouthpiece of Quakerism. In 1698, while staying for the last time in London, she wrote a letter of affectionate congratulation to King William, "who hast been very moderate and merciful to us and we live very comfortably under thee," and another short epistle to Edmund Waller, son of the poet, to cheer that young convert out of the riches of her long experience.

Her last letter "To Friends" has that personal note for which one seeks vainly in so many quartos of theological discourses,† and was followed three months before her

* Works of Margaret Fell, p. 534 (dated Swarthmoor, June, 1698).

† MSS. in Devonshire House, Portfolio xxv. 66.

death by a solemn "Revival of her Testimony." Both were called forth by the growing tendency which she perceived in "some" to lay stress upon conformity in outward observances and in dress, to the neglect of inward holiness. This, if it were encouraged, would open the door to hypocrisy and self-righteousness, which, now that persecution had ceased, lay in wait for the comfortable and respected Church. We have a glimpse of the old woman of eighty-eight, pleading that young people should be dressed "in pleasing fashions" and bright colours, still, with her failing eyesight, taking a delight in the flowers, "which grow in more royalty than Solomon," and drawing her strongest argument from the "changing colours" of the hills that stood round about her home. To Margaret Fox the spirit of outward conformity was the enemy of inward righteousness—of that doctrine which had won her allegiance in her early womanhood, and formed the core of the message of her dear friend and Father in God. Now in extreme old age, bereaved of the husband of her youth, of the friend and spiritual guide of her later years—looking back over a life marked by persecution and cruelty, saddened by the treachery of her only son and of the King whom she had trusted—she could find no word of regret for the course which she had chosen. "I have nothing that troubleth me," she said to her sorrowful daughters, "I have a clear conscience." And with a faltering hand she wrote her last word to "Friends": "I give this my Testimony while I breathe upon the earth, that I shall stand for God and Truth."

CHAPTER IV

PRISONS AND SUFFERINGS

I.

AMONGST old books treating of the rise of Quakerism, there is none more characteristic, nor more packed with interest, than that which is commonly known as "Besse's Sufferings." It consists of two ponderous folio volumes, published in London in 1753, and bears the complete title: "A Collection of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers, from 1650 to 1689, taken from original Records, and other authentic Accounts, by Joseph Besse."

Dealing with the first forty years of Quakerism, it covers the period of Fox's active ministry, and that era of persecution which is synonymous with the era of growth in the Quaker Church. Fox might well have accepted the motto which Shakespeare had put into the mouth of Shylock half a century before. Suffering was the badge of the early Quaker movement, the summary of its history, and the root of its success.

Fortunately for posterity, Fox was keenly alive to the value of records. He wrote an Advice to Friends, in 1657, to keep copies "of all their sufferings, whether for Tithes, refusing Church repairs, not swearing, not putting off their hats, ill-treatment at Meetings, or when moved of the Lord to go to steeple-houses."*

Besse's book was compiled one hundred years later from these documents, which had been written at Fox's desire, at the time and at the scene of the "Suffering" recorded.

* Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 99.

Fox's immediate purpose was to lay the accounts before the Judges in Circuit, and also before the Protector, in the hope that the guilt of persecution might be brought home to its authors. A prominent London Friend was appointed to receive the reports, and to see to it that the Protector was not kept in ignorance of the doings of his justices.

But the records served a more practical purpose than the irritation of Oliver Cromwell, who neither wished nor dared, for the sake of one obtrusive and tactless sect, to offend the Presbyterians and Independents, from whom his power was derived. Through the energy of Margaret Fell, a Fund was instituted "For the Service of Truth," which was disbursed upon the information furnished by these reports, for the relief of prisoners, and the payment of fines.

A Report in the State Papers bearing the date January 21, 1660-61, at the time of the Fifth Monarchy Plot, proves how great was the misunderstanding and alarm occasioned to the authorities by this system of intelligence.

*"Sir Robert Hildyard, Hull, to sir Francis Cobb, Knt.
at Whitehall.*

"In searching for Armes there was found at Risum in Holdernesse in a Quakers house diverse papers wherein it doth appeare that they have constant meetings and intelligence all over the Kingdome, though masked under the spetious pretence of Religion and piety. . . . They also keep Registers of all ye affronts and injuryes yt is done to any of them, when where and by whome. Therefore it doth appeare they are an active subtill people, and it is a greate mercy that their designes did produce no more mischeife to this kingdome."*

In 1675 a Meeting began to be held in London for the consideration of such "affronts and injuries" reported from the country. At this time at least one Friend was

* Extracts from State Papers, p. 127. Published for the Friends' Historical Society, 1913.

chosen from the Quarterly Meeting of each county, "to be in readiness to repair to any of the said meetings at this city, at such times as their urgent occasions or sufferings shall require." This is the "Meeting for Sufferings," which still assembles every month under the old name, in the service of the distressed and the cause of peace*—the meeting which sent out a Commission, backed by more than £10,000, to relieve the misery caused by the late war in the Balkans, and is contributing largely towards the cost of opposition to conscription in Australasia.

In his introduction Besse gives as the "criterion, or distinguishing mark" of the early Quakers, "their Sobriety, and Gravity, and their abstaining from Pastimes." There can be no doubt that these peculiarities, petty as they seem, were the cause of much of their unpopularity, and produced that atmosphere of dislike and suspicion in which persecution could flourish. The English of Fox's day prided themselves beyond all else on being a God-fearing people, and the assumption of superior holiness with which the Quakers were credited, no less than the unrelaxing solemnity of their carriage, were resented as an undeserved reproach on their neighbours.

It is a common error to believe that the Puritans as a whole were opposed to recreation. Oliver Cromwell, "the Great Independent," incurred the rebuke of Margaret Fell in 1656, because, instead of showing humility "before the Lord, thou art feasting and feeding with riotous persons, with musick, and sporting with them, which practices are abominable to God."†

This terrible indictment was not applicable to the Court alone. Mary Penington, William Penn's mother-in-law, wrote an account of her early religious struggles, at the

* "The Society of Friends: Its Faith and Practice," by J. S. Rowntree, p. 28. Headley Brothers, 1908.

† Works of Margaret Fell: "Third Letter to Oliver Cromwell," p. 16.

time of the Protectorate. She gives a picture of her attempts to drown her conscience "in recreations as they are called . . . as foolish mirth, carding, dancing, singing, and frequenting of music meetings"—and this at the period when we are accustomed to believe that the death blow was given to Merrie England.*

The horror with which the early Quakers mentioned the word "pastime," and the many Testimonies which they wrote "Against Gaming, Musick, Dancing, Singing, Swearing, and Peoples' calling upon God to damn them," are sufficient evidence of the popularity of these practices. "Musick," always linked by a strange association with "carding and swearing," is feelingly described as "a thing that stealeth the hearts of them that play upon it, or adhere unto it, from the Lord." "Pastime," as an Irish Quaker wrote at a slightly later date, "is a term reproachful in the mouth of a Christian . . . bespeaking him senseless of the term of this life, being rather too short than too long for the accomplishment of the great work of preparing his soul for a better country."†

The same reason contributed to their non-observance of public holidays, and even in extreme cases of the Sabbath itself:

"They were called of God to bear a public testimony against this corruption, by keeping open their shops, and following their lawful occupations, at these as well as at other times."

Fox himself did not advocate Sunday labour, but left the question open for the decision of every man's conscience.‡ Many isolated cases of imprisonment are recorded for breach of the Sabbath, while in the year 1659 a number of Friends were punished in London for keeping their shops open on Christmas Day. The refusal of the Quaker shopkeepers of Dublin to observe the

* "Experiences of Mary Penington." London, 1911.

† Rutty's "History of Quakerism in Ireland," p. 434 (1751).

‡ Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 314, and note on p. 461.

festival proved such an annoyance to the loyal Churchmen of the city, that riots were organized every year, and a procession of apprentices went through the streets to accomplish by force what they could not do by example. It was not until 1702 that the Mayor of Dublin issued a proclamation forbidding riotous assemblies for the purpose of shutting the shops of Friends.*

Quaker merchants aroused the jealousy of their rivals still further by their principle of keeping to one price for the goods which they sold, and their refusal to make any abatement of a charge once fixed. This occasioned at first a great falling away of custom amounting almost to the prospect of ruin for the Quaker tradesmen. After a while, however, their customers "saw into the justice thereof," and the fear arose that the Friends would monopolize the trade of the nation, for, as Sewel relates, it became a common thing for a stranger entering a town to inquire for the shops which were kept by Quakers, so widespread was their reputation for honest dealing. Such appreciation, however, was not conducive to their popularity amongst their fellow-shopkeepers.†

The dislike aroused by the unsocial practices of the Quakers was enormously increased by their rejection of courteous salutations, their use of "Thee and Thou" in address, and their refusal of "hat-honour." It is difficult in this unceremonious age to appreciate the heroism of these acts of non-conformity, and the suffering entailed by them seems to be out of all proportion to their importance. In the seventeenth century the private citizen was the step-child of the State—his food, his clothes, his very walk and conversation underwent the scrutiny of the law. The years which followed the execution of Charles I. marked the apotheosis of grandmotherly legislation. Peace had her victories no less than war. The Ironsides, who had won the religious freedom of their country at Naseby and Worcester, searched the houses of their compatriots at

* Rutt, p. 204.

† Sewel, vol. i. p. 142.

Christmas for mince pies and roast beef, and dragged the convicted revellers before their commanding officer.* On June 28, 1650, an Act was passed by Parliament against profane cursing and swearing, which was proclaimed in all cities, towns, and boroughs. According to its graduated scale, an esquire found guilty of swearing was to pay a fine of 10s., a gentleman 6s. 8d., and all persons under these degrees 3s. 4d. for a single offence. "As they continue in swearing, their fine is to be for every oath doubled"—a provision which must have resulted in many a lurid scene between "gentleman" and informer, and a proportionately rapid filling of the Government coffers.† Even Charles II. in the first days of his landing issued a proclamation

"Against Vicious, Debauched and Prophane Persons . . . who have more discredited our cause by the License of their Manners and lives than they could ever advance it by their Affection and Courage," concluding with the aspiration that "they will hereafter become examples of Sobriety and Vertue."

While such minutiae of private conduct engrossed much of the attention of Parliament, the changes which Fox was introducing into social customs were not likely to pass unnoticed. His scruples appeared to the superficial observer to be nothing deeper than a perverse cavilling at accepted forms, and the punishment they met with was meted out by an authority outraged by his discourtesy and contempt of the Higher Powers. But his discourtesy arose from his passion for truth, and his plain speech from the determination to carry sincerity into every detail of daily life. The same motives lay behind his refusal to take an oath, though in this case his authority was the definite command of Christ. Like Tolstoï, two hundred years later, he interpreted literally the injunction "Swear not at all," and applied it not only to profane swearing,

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 8.

† Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 57.

where, as we have seen, it was already sufficiently safeguarded, but to the customary preliminaries of legal or State transactions. This refusal to swear was, perhaps, the most fruitful of all sources of suffering, and when other accusations failed, could always be relied on to procure a conviction in a court of law. It prejudiced the cause of Friends, not only at their own trials, but in every department of legal business, and was frequently turned to their disadvantage by dishonest creditors.

If these scruples brought the Quakers into bad odour with their fellow-townsmen and the magistrates, their relation to the religion by law established threw them into collision with the "priests"—the strongest and most influential body in England. From the day that George Fox had realized that "to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to make a man to be a minister of Christ," he had gone no more to church. Henceforth when he or his followers entered the "steeple-house" it was for the purpose of interrupting the preacher or combating his doctrine, or perchance with the more peaceable motive of addressing a congregation ready to their hand at the close of service. To these insults they added the practical injury of refusing to pay tithes for the support of the clergy, an action which has called forth more explanatory and denunciatory literature than any other Quaker practice. The common-sense reason for their refusal was that they received no benefit from the parish priest's ministrations, and should not therefore be required to pay for them—a principle beloved in theory by the English Constitution. But their onslaught upon tithes had many less evident grounds. Tithes were "a part of the Jewish Ceremonial Law, abolished by Christ"—a popish innovation on Christianity, not necessary to the being and support of a Christian ministry, and consequently a grievance on the people; and their payment was an acknowledgment of the "Validity of a Call, which is but human and worldly, and supported by the Arm

and Power of the Flesh."* These conclusive reasons failed to satisfy the priests or those in authority. Sewel relates that although there were no fines levied in Cromwell's time to oblige people to frequent the National Church—a source of revenue common in Elizabeth's reign, which it was left to Charles II.'s counsellors to rediscover—the Quakers were frequently imprisoned for not paying tithes.

Punishments for the interruption of services (known in Fox's euphemistic phrase as "going to steeple-houses") were already frequent, when a proclamation was issued in 1654, "prohibiting the disturbing of ministers and other Christians in their assemblies and meetings." A Quaker *Mittimus* which has been preserved in the State Papers is interesting in this connection. Anne Blaykling, the prisoner, was described by her friends as a "pretious lively heart," but it appears a few years later that her liveliness was in danger of obscuring her worth, and her connection with the Quaker Church was severed for a while on account of her "singularity and whimsies in several things." In common with every prominent woman Friend of that date, she is frequently reported as being in prison "for speaking to a priest," though it is but fair to remember that the extreme vigour of her language, as quoted in the *Mittimus*, is of a Biblical model usual in seventeenth-century controversy.

"I send yoe heere withall in the Custody of the Constable of Haverill, the Bodey of Anne Blacklyn, late of Ladbridge in the countie of Yorke, for that shee was this day brought before me and charged with the enteringe into the Church of Haverill and there Affronted the Minister in the Pulpit, callinge him Priest, hirelinge and deceiver, greadie dume dogge, with manie more words of the same nature. All which the said Ann Blacklyn have this day confessed before me and still doe continue to aver the same. And for that she refuseth to find sureties for her apperance These are therefore in the name of

* Rutty, p. 413.

His Highnesse the Lord Protector of England etc. to charge and command yoe upon sighte heereof to take and receive into yor Gaole the Bodye of the sd. Ann Blacklyn and her safely to keepe untill she shall be from thence delivered by due Order of Lawe And heereof faile not at yr perille. Dated this 16th of Dec. 1656. Thomas Barnardiston. Kt."

The prisoner's fate was to lie in prison for three months waiting for the Assizes, when she was sentenced to "re-mayne in gaole untill she shall paye a ffine of XX nobles."*

About the same time an old law passed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth against "wandering vagabonds" was revived to meet the case of the travelling preacher. He was thrown into prison as "an idle wandering fellow and a common disturber of the peace," and might count himself happy if he escaped a public whipping. Meanwhile the "retired" meetings of the Quakers who stayed at home gave occasion for much surmise in those days of a nervous and unstable Government, and the circulation of polemic and theological literature was misinterpreted as the "spreading of seditious books." In 1656 this danger appeared so pressing to the authorities in the South of England that they issued a general warrant for the arrest of Quakers. The composition of this document, to say nothing of the unwearied ingenuity of the spelling, is worthy of Dogberry himself, though it may have suffered in this latter respect during its transcription into Fox's Journal.

"Which warant," he says, "is to aprehend to take up all such as are Quackers and cales themselves Quackers or goe under the noshon of Queckers which warant is to be sent to the chef constables and for them to send them to the pettey constebeles And for them to sett watches Able men of ability with billes to take upp all Queckers and profese them selves Queckers and goes under the name and noshon of it."†

* Extracts from State Papers, 1st Series, p. 20.

† Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 232.

The recovery of tithes could only be accomplished by distraint, and the imposition of a fine where the prisoner refused to recognize the justice of his trial was a mere matter of form. In most cases he lay in prison until the judge relented, or the intercession of his friends obtained his pardon. But the appearance of a Quaker to plead with the magistrate for wife or friend was often the occasion of his own committal to prison.

There was little mercy shown in the distraining of goods, and the priests were the worst offenders in the matter. The exact amount of a tithe was the last thing to be considered: the opportunity was too tempting of impounding any desirable piece of livestock or furniture upon which the clergyman might have set his heart in the course of his pastoral visitations. One woman Friend, for instance, being the mistress of a large farm, writes to Fox that she would gladly have ridden to meet him at some point of his journeys in her neighbourhood, if she had possessed a horse strong enough to carry her so far; but "I dare keep none that are good, for the greedy hireling priest."*

A remarkable story is given in Besse's "Sufferings" of the personal plundering of a tithe-resister's house by the wife of the priest of Yatton, in Somerset—

"who, with her servant-maid and a Boy, came to the house of George Allen, he being from Home, searched about from Room to Room till they found the Cheese Chamber, the Lock of which they pickt, and went in and carried away twelve Cheeses, worth twenty shillings. In the same Manner also they went into the House of Gabriel Davis, and took away Cheeses worth 18 shillings. In such lawless Proceedings"—so comments the recorder of the suffering—"they thought they might be secure, having to do with a People whom they perceived, in the Cause of Religion, unwilling to avenge themselves by having Recourse to Law."†

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 185.

† Besse, vol. i., p. 633.

Beds and bedding, "pillow-biers" (*i.e.*, bolsters), and a warming-pan were distrained in one day from a family in Ilchester, for the crime of holding a meeting.

"That night," writes the master of the house, "my dear wife lay on the ground by the fire with some straw under her head: nor can we with safety receive or keep any Goods or Bedding in our House, not knowing but they will take it away."

Women Quakers enjoyed no privileges, and no mercy was shown to them. The conduct of the Mayor of Evesham in 1656 is typical of scores of similar instances. This provincial magnate, Edward Young by name, had taken a vow that "he would break the Quaker Meetings, or else his bones should lie in the dirt." During his term of office the Friends were herded in the prison house of Evesham, a noisome cell 12 feet square, into which light and air were admitted through a hole 4 inches wide.

Two women preachers coming into the town attempted to visit these prisoners, but were seized by the Mayor with his own hands before they could gain admittance to the gaol. He ordered them to be placed in the stocks without pretence of trial. By a refinement of cruelty, their feet were set in holes almost a yard apart, and their request of a block to sit upon was refused them. They sat on the ground for fifteen hours in this torturing position, and were then driven out of the town into the freezing night, without a moment's respite for rest or food.*

Perhaps the most pathetic letter ever sent to George Fox from his travelling preachers was written by Gervase Benson in the cold Christmas weather of 1653:

"My wife I lefte at Yorke in outward bonds, but in much inward freedome and comfort. Anne Blakeling"

* Besse, vol. ii., pp. 59, 60; and "First Publishers of Truth," pp. 268, 282. London, 1907.

(the pretious lively heart) "I left with her. . . . It was of the lord Anne Blakelinge comeinge to Yorke my wife expectinge every houre since she got thither to fall into travell. Praises to him for ever."*

The sufferings of the Quakers during the Protectorate were summarized in an account furnished in 1659 to Thomas Bampffield, the Speaker, which set forth that during the six preceding years 200 had suffered by imprisonment or fines—"in body or goods." More than 140 named persons were then in prison, and 21 had died during captivity.†

II.

In the spring of 1660 the Declaration of Breda was issued by the exiled King, giving the promise of religious freedom to all Nonconformists. It aroused great hopes amongst the suffering Quakers, who were as eager as any of Charles's loyal subjects in preparing addresses of welcome and noble salutations.‡ One woman, indeed, Anne Clayton, the former maid at Swarthmoor, was so carried away by her affectionate enthusiasm as to apostrophize him in Broadside under the title "Dear Heart!"

For a few months all went well. Thanks to Margaret Fell's representations, Charles signed an order for the release of all Quaker prisoners left captive at the fall of the Protectorate; but the discovery of the Fifth Monarchy Plot (a half-crazy conspiracy of those practical idealists who would have no King but Jesus) threw doubt on the loyalty of all branches of sectaries. Suspicion being once awakened, every fresh discovery of the Quaker tenets could only strengthen it. The Friends had suffered under the late Government from their refusal to take the Oath of Abjuration. After the Restoration, their inability to take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy was interpreted as a disloyal act.

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 33.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 376.

‡ Sewel's "History," vol. i., pp. 450, 452, etc.

Their position was the more precarious through the enmity of Clarendon, the newly-appointed Chancellor. While Cromwell lived, his personal admiration for Fox, and his outspoken conviction of the evil of religious intolerance, must have checked, though it could not quell, the violence of the persecution; but Clarendon, whose power was at that time absolute with the King, made no secret of his disapproval of the policy of granting concessions to Dissenters.* Neither Cromwell nor Charles refused the Quakers a grudging and half-humorous admiration, commending their integrity, and upholding their innocence and faithfulness; but Clarendon, embittered by his experience of place-hunting and grasping ecclesiastics in his own beloved Church of England, refused to recognize superior virtues in the Dissenters.

"Their Faction," says he, "is their Religion: nor are those Combinations ever entered into upon real and Substantial Motives of Conscience how erroneous soever, but consist of many glutinous materials, of Will, and Humour and Folly and Knavery, and Ambition and Malice, which make Men cling inseparably together, till they have Satisfaction in all their Pretences, or till They are absolutely broken and subdued, which may always be more easily done than the other."

Such were the motives and convictions which dictated the Clarendon Code.

The Act of Uniformity, passed in 1662, was the first step in this process of "breaking and subduing." It affected the whole body of Nonconformists, while the Quaker Act of the same year was directed specifically against the followers of Fox. This statute was strengthened and amplified in 1664 by the Conventicle Act. It forbade the assembly of five or more Quakers, on penalty of a fine of £5 for a first offence, and £10 for the second. For the third offence a fine of £100 was imposed, with

* "Life of Clarendon," vol. ii., p. 280. Oxford, 1759.

the alternative of seven years' transportation to any of his Majesty's foreign plantations, excepting Virginia and New England, which had already passed on its own account an Act of Banishment upon pain of death for all Quakers. Provision was made for recovering the cost of transportation out of the offender's land or goods, or the alternative was offered to the shipmaster of detaining and employing his passenger for the space of five years.*

By the provisions of the Act 33 Car. II. the fines for absence from national worship were very heavy. We read of thirty-eight prisoners in Bristol, at once a stronghold of Quakerism and a seat of persecution (the terms were interchangeable), whose fines for eleven months' absence amounted to £8,360. The sum owed by the wives of two of these prisoners was £440. It is almost unnecessary to add that they lay in gaol till King James's proclamation in 1685 released all Quaker prisoners.†

As though these laws were not stringent or speedy enough in their working, official encouragement was given in 1663 to the despicable race of informers, who continued to ply their task with pleasure and profit during the whole of the reign.

"Att this time," Fox notes in his Journal, "there was offred a noble and 5s. a day to any men yt coulde apprehende ye speakers amongst ye Quakers."‡

Besides this emolument, one-third of the fine exacted from the prisoner went to the informer who had secured his conviction.

"A Petty-fogging Catterpillar"—so a contemporary Tract describes him—"He ferrets a Conventicle just as a Poll-Cat does Rabbets in their Burroughs, and the Rich Men there skulke down in their Pews when they see him come in, dreading him more than a Partridge does a Hawke, or a City Crack a Marshal's Man."§

* Note by W. C. Braithwaite to Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 280.

† "Persecution Exposed," by John Whiting, p. 95.

‡ Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 37.

§ Note to Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 418.

The opening chapter of the seventh book of Sewel's "History" gives a summary of the sufferings which followed the Quaker Act, and its later chapters are only an amplification of the same tragic theme. In the year 1662 there were more than 4,200 men and women Quakers in the prisons of England.

"Many of these had been grievously beaten, or their clothes torn or taken away from them: and some were put into such stinking dungeons that some great men said, they would not have put their hunting dogs there. Some prisons were crowded full both of men and women, so that there was not sufficient room for all to sit down at once: and in Cheshire sixty-eight persons were in this manner locked up in a small room; an evident sign that they were a harmless people, that would not make any resistance or use force. By such ill-treatment many grew sick, and not a few died in such jails; for no age or sex was regarded but even ancient people of sixty, seventy, and more years of age were not spared: and the most of these being tradesmen, shopkeepers, and husbandmen, were thus reduced to poverty: for their goods were also seized, for not going to church (so called) or for not paying tythes. Many times they were fain to lie in prison on cold nasty ground, without being suffered to have any straw; and often they have been kept several days without victuals: no wonder therefore that many died by such hard imprisonments as these."

The Friends met this storm of persecution with magnificent courage. In all the letters which reached Margaret Fell during the next twenty years there is no hint of cowardice—none even of hesitation. "A proclamation has been read at the High Cross against Papists and Nonconformists," and we are "preparing our minds for prisons in these parts."*

"Friends who suffer are advised not to let out their minds into too much expectation of outward relief . . .

* T. Salthouse, Somerset, 21. 1. 1668. (Swarthmoor MSS., i. 102.)

but that they patiently and principally depend upon the Lord and his power to plead their cause.”*

For them there could be no question of compromise. Many of the Puritan preachers, including certain of the Baptists, “Flying Baptists,” as Fox called them, took refuge at Barnett Hills, a “free” place, out of the jurisdiction of the Five Mile Act.† Presbyterians were known to continue their meetings around a table set with bread and cheese, cold meat, and tobacco-pipes, that in the event of a surprise visit from constable or informer, they might be cleared from the accusation of holding a religious service.‡ These subterfuges were so far from the spirit of the Quakers that their “Retired Meetings” were discontinued in Bristol during the heat of the persecution, and their public meetings held with greater publicity than before, lest the faint-hearted should be tempted to avoid an open confession. Fox himself, in his wise moderation, wrote an Epistle to the London Meeting in which he deprecated this extreme course.

“Ye that go to minister to the world take not the whole meeting of friends with you, to suffer with and by the world’s spirit, but let Friends keep together and wait in their own meeting-place, and let 3 or 4 or 6 that are grown up and are strong (in the truth) go to such unbroken places and thresh the heathenish nature, and there is true service for the Lord.”§

Once arrested, the prisoner was at the mercy of the judge before whom he was brought. It was in the power of a kindly disposed magistrate to release him, through the avoidance of awkward tests. This may be seen in the report of the trial of Margaret Fell, whose judge hesitated to apply the Law of Premunire, as being “too penal for her.” As a rule, however, the justice had been

* Minutes of Yearly Meeting, 1675.

† Fox’s Journal, vol. ii., p. 18, and note on p. 383.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

§ Epistles, No. 14.

irritated at the outset by the hat of the prisoner, and his use of the word "Thou," and if he were not committed for contempt of court without further parley, the tendering of the Oath of Allegiance would suffice to send him to prison.

The state of the English law in the seventeenth century with regard to prisons was worthy of Looking-Glass Land. The magistrate's responsibility was defined by William Kirby, the justice to whom Margaret Fell complained of the accommodation of her fellow-prisoners: "They were to commit them to prison, but not to provide prisons for them." * This duty devolved upon the gaoler, who was an autocrat, and responsible to no authority. It frequently happened that he was a convicted and branded felon, chosen for the position by reason of his strength and brutality.†

Prisoners were in the Gilbertian position of being required to pay for this enforced hospitality, and their first act must be to make the most favourable terms possible with their gaoler-landlord or his wife, for food and lodging.

"Abought 1653," Thomas Holme writes from Chester Jail, in his phonetic style, "they yous much tirrorany here, for we pay two penc a night for our beds, every pertickler." ‡

The charges varied with the place of imprisonment and the pleasure of the gaoler. The accounts contain the entry of a payment made to Jane Waugh, one of John Camm's ex-serving maids, "For charges in prison, 18 days...4s. 6d;" § but Holme's "2 pence a night" pales before the exactions of an Irish turnkey, who charged three shillings a day for one room, presumably a private cell.

But for this Fund, instituted by Margaret Fell, it is hard to guess how these charges could have been met by

* Works of Margaret Fell, p. 288.

† See Fox's account of Launceston Gaol, Journal, vol. i., p. 228.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 189.

§ *Ibid.*, 295.

the poor husbandmen, who, with their wives, formed the majority of the Quaker prisoners. Their mystical pride and integrity forbade them to accept help from outside sources, however kindly intentioned. Thomas Holme remarks in the letter already quoted :

“There is many that ofereth us money, but we doe deny it, for it is cains sacrafise, ofred up in the first birth, which sacrefice we doe deny.”

Ann Clayton's letter from Lancaster Castle to her former mistress gives a clear picture of the little band of prisoners confined there in 1654. It shows the scrupulous care with which the accounts of public money were rendered to Margaret Fell, no less than the unquestioning trust which she reposed in those to whom she had consigned it. There is an interesting glimpse of a sympathizer (not a Quaker, apparently) outside the walls. The letter records the conscientious refusal of one of the prisoners to accept the modest dole which he offered him, and the arrival in its stead of the “great Ganacke” or loaf of leavened bread, a welcome gift to the recipient and his companions, who had long been unused to such dainty fare. The letter begins and ends on a pathetic note of apprehension, for the money sent was beginning to run short, and Friends feared to be left in want.

“Ann Clayton to M. ff. My deare Mother—this is to let thee know that heare is but littell in stocke for frends and I have sent thee the noate that thou may see how it is disposed of. the thinge I know is noe thing to thee, nor to me but littell, but only to avoid the ocasion of hard thoughts. My deare hart, William West is very chearefull and loving to all frends heare, and wherever he sees any of us, whoever be with him he is not ashamed to speake to us, for truly A prity bold chearfull love is raised in him towards frends. . . . A prity while since, he sent John Driver six pence . . . and desired that he would take as much of him every weeke as long as he staid in the Castell, but John was not free to doe soe: and the last week he sent him a great Ganacke which they said his man brought from his own house. As sowne as it can conveniently be,

there may be sune monie sent hider, for I know some frends will be at sune want shortly."*

The letter is labelled, "Account of the charges in prisens," and endorsed: "Disburse that monie that came from Swartmore to . . . Ann Cleaton . . . to every one of them 10s."

Poverty was the least of the evils from which these prisoners suffered. Overcrowding, lack of fresh air, absence of any attempt at sanitation, bitter cold, or, if fire were permitted, so thick a smoke that breathing was almost impossible—add to these the herding together with foul-mouthed and evil-minded felons, and one begins to wonder, not that 200 Quakers died in prison during the fifteen years following the Restoration, but rather that so many survived to profit by the gaol-delivery which the King was now and then prevailed upon to order.

But there was a happier side even to the picture of misery afforded by a seventeenth-century house of correction. A prisoner in one of their pestilential cells could head his letter: "From Appleby Jail, the place of my rest, where my days and hours are pleasant unto me." It was possible for the close confinement and the comparative quiet to taste sweet to those captives who found refuge from the hands of a howling mob behind these thick walls, and whose life at home was exposed to the persecution of the parish priest and the scorn and ill-usage of their neighbours. A complacent gaoler could allow them an amazing degree of liberty to come and go—their friends might be given free access to them, and they could lie upon their own beds without fear of the "plundering priest."

"This day and yesterday," writes a prisoner at Ilchester in 1683, "I have had some liberty to come to my house, which is in a stone's cast of the goal, but lodge there at night, and my wife also having a bed and furni-

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 310.

ture sent us by my son . . . (who also is a prisoner, but pretty much at liberty at home)—the Goal being the safest Place for it.”*

It was a common thing for prisoners to support themselves and their families by their own trade as they lay in gaol. Ellwood, the friend of Milton, tells how he learnt in Newgate to make “Night-Wastcoats, of Red and Yellow Flannel, for Women and Children,” and how the hosier in Cheapside for whom he worked paid him one crown piece for his weeks of labour, though he had made several dozens of garments, providing the thread himself, “which, I thought, was very poor pay.”†

The refusal of opportunity for work was one of the petty tyrannies exercised by unfriendly gaolers. William Bayly, who was later to become the husband of Mary Fisher, the heroine of Adrianople, writes a peremptory letter from his prison in Poole, “to John Bulkley, called a Justice.” He demands room and liberty

“to work at my calling, and also for a friend to come in and out with my work, (and not be abused). And to this thing I do expect a speedy answer from thee: for it is unreasonable that I should be kept from my work and my work from me, who have done no evil.”‡

Women prisoners were allowed to carry their spinning-wheels with them to gaol. No one who has read Fox’s Journal can forget the picture of those September days in 1662, when he rode with his fellow-prisoners in a cart, through the country side, on his way to Leicester :

“And soe as wee went wee past through ye people in ye feilds att there harvest: and in ye toundes. And wee declared ye truth to ym with our open bibles in our handes: and ye two women they carryd wheeles on(e) there lapps to spinn in prison. Soe wee ridd through ye

* Besse, vol. i., p. 631.

† “Life of Thomas Ellwood,” p. 140. Headley Brothers, 1906.

‡ “A Collection of the Several Wrightings of William Bayly,” etc. 1676.

country to Leister in yt manner five of us : and declared howe wee were ye prisoners of ye Lord Jesus Christ for his name and his truth sake. And ye people was mightily affected." *

It proved, indeed, an impossible task to stop the mouths of the Quaker preachers or to limit their influence. Services were regularly held in the gaols, whence the words of the preacher reached not only his fellow-prisoners, but the passers-by on the roadside, or even the magistrates at their game of bowls, beneath the windows. Sewel describes the zeal of one prisoner who was confined in a

"nasty dungeon where there was nothing to lie on but some filthy straw, and a stone to sit on. But there being an opening at the top of the room he could see people go along the streets, and thus took occasion from this subterranean cave to preach to the passengers with such power and efficacy that his doctrine entered into the hearts of his hearers and stuck there. This manner of preaching often hath been in England, and I myself in my young years have been an eyewitness of it : and have heard the prisoners lift up their voice so that it could be heard very easily in the streets : which made people that passed by, stand still and hearken to what was spoken by such zealous preachers, and though these were often hindered of having meetings, yet it was impossible to stop up the fountain from whence their words flowed." †

The persecution had been devised with a view to suppressing the new sect, but it soon became evident that the means were ill-chosen. The more familiar the Quakers became with the inside of a gaol, the higher rose their reputation in the country : while the number who joined the Society increased steadily in proportion to the danger of such allegiance. Summing up towards the end of his life Fox was able to record :

"There was never any persecution yt came but wee saw it was for Good and wee looket upon it to bee good as from God and there was never any prisons or suffer-

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 14.

† Sewel vol. i., p. 251.

inges yt I was in but still it was for ye bringeinge multitudes more out of prison. . . . Soe yt there was a time when there was soe many in prison yt it became as a by worde : truth was not any where to bee found butt in goales.”*

This belief in the truth of the persecuted people had strange consequences. We know on Fox’s authority that it was usual for constables to give Friends their own mittimus, and let them deliver themselves and it to the gaoler of the nearest town. “They durst trust friends with it in most places.” In Ellwood’s autobiography we have the extraordinary account of the march of a large body of Quaker prisoners without a keeper, through the busiest streets of London from Newgate to Bridewell, the porter trusting to their honour to be there before bed-time.† Fox’s invitation to a captaincy in a Derby regiment is not the only instance of a Government appointment being offered to an undischarged prisoner, and we read of a Friend who had lain in gaol for two years, being released to take up the title and duties of a constable.

These are some of the bright exceptions in a chronicle of abominable oppression and savagery, and were only possible where a certain amount of meekness and acquiescence were present on the part of the prisoner. The more rigid of the Quakers were not free to acknowledge the authority which condemned them, and passive resistance was called upon to oppose injustice. It was a common thing for Friends to refuse their names to the constable, causing their mittimus to be made out by a none-too-flattering personal description. They would refuse to walk to the prison, obliging their captors to hire carts to convey them in, and thus incidentally putting a stop to their persecution, for the hire of carts falling upon the county was too dear a price to pay for the satisfaction involved.‡ In extreme cases they would refuse even to

* Fox’s Journal, vol. ii., p. 338.

† Ellwood, p. 158.

‡ Fox’s Journal, vol. ii., p. 32.

enter the conveyance which had been sent to carry them to prison. A letter is extant written in 1671 by a perturbed official in the country to Sir Joseph Williamson at Whitehall. It describes the dispersal of a meeting at Pakefield in Suffolk, and the refusal of eleven Quakers who were captured to give in their names. A warrant was fetched from the justice, whereupon the constable commanded his prisoners to go with him. This they declined to do, referring him to the terms of the warrant, which required him to bring them himself before the magistrate. The exasperated constable then sent for a cart, only to find that his prisoners "were not free to goe in of themselves." The account which follows of the lading of the cart with passive Quakers, "their length, one upon another," would make comical reading if it were not so painful. Arriving at the justice's door, they refused to leave the cart which they had so unwillingly entered, and were tilted out all together, like a load of stones. One is relieved to learn at last that "coming before Sir Thomas [Meddowes], they all gave in their names and were dismiss for ye present."*

The hunger strike, which was frequently practised by both men and women prisoners, seems to complete their startling resemblance to the twentieth-century sufferers for an ideal. But their fasting was undertaken from more complicated motives than a simple desire to protest against the injustice of their punishment. Fasting as a religious exercise was not uncommon at the time. It was employed on the pattern of the Old Testament as a sign against the wickedness of outsiders, and we hear of a fast called at Coggeshall, on July 12, 1655, "to pray against the errors of the people called Quakers."† Reprobation of "the fauts o' ither kirks" was perhaps the commonest motive for the hunger strike as then practised. We have the word of one woman prisoner that her abstinence even

* Extracts from State Papers, fourth series, p. 332.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 196.

from water for six days was undertaken as a sign to the world that man must not live by bread alone; and on another occasion her fast lasting "14 days and 14 nights completely" was intended as a witness to "that dark professing people."* It is clear that those who fasted were quite unconscious of the heroism of their action, and even in the tempting opportunity of an autobiography they show no trace of a desire to pose as martyrs. When on two occasions the death of a Quaker in prison was claimed by his persecutors as the result of his "wilful rejecting of his natural food," the verdict was repudiated by Fox and other Friends as a shameful accusation.†

An account of the impression made upon an educated outsider by a glimpse of these sufferings may be quoted to round off the painful history. Evelyn wrote in his Diary under the date of July 8, 1656:

"I had the curiosity to visit some Quakers here in prison (at Ipswich) a new fanatic sect, of dangerous principles, who show no respect to any man, magistrate or other, and seem a melancholy, proud sort of people, and exceeding ignorant. One of these was said to have fasted 20 days, but another, endeavouring to do the like, perished on the 10th, when he would have eaten, but could not."

Such was Evelyn's verdict upon a people who, if he had but known it, were the strangest sign of the times, and the most powerful influence then abroad in England—a people whose offences were self-evident, but to whose motives and ideals he possessed no key.

* "The Travels of Barbara Blaugdone." London, 1691.

† See Death of Parnel in Colchester, 1655 (Sewel, vol. i., p. 201, and Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 126); and of Luffe in Rome, 1660 (Sewel, vol. i., p. 472).

III.

Neither Parliament nor King continued in these cruel courses without protest from the sufferers or from their friends who were still at liberty. A preacher restrained from bodily activity set down his words upon paper; they were scattered broadcast through the country, presented to the Members of Parliament, or delivered to the King. If Charles had been wise enough to discern the loyalty which informed these voluminous epistles, or to recognize the untutored but true instinct which dictated their counsels, there would have been no need for the Revolution of 1688. Women were the chief agents in the distribution of these writings. Margaret Fell had free access to the Court, and could influence the King both by speech and by the letters of herself and her friends. Humbler women stood in the market-places, selling the pamphlets, or cried them about the streets. It was a common thing for Quakers, both men and women, to offer themselves as substitutes for those who lay in prison, or to petition that they might take their place for a few days, while the prisoners visited their homes and recovered their health. In the last weeks of the Commonwealth, 160 persons sent in their names to Parliament as substitutes for their friends in prison, offering, as their vivid phrase ran, "to lie body for body," an offer which was passed over in contemptuous silence, with the irrelevant comment that if they did not speedily go away they should all be well whipped.* There is indeed no instance of a substitute being accepted, though in one case, as will be seen, Cromwell was so touched by the devotion of a woman who had travelled from her home in Westmorland to offer herself in the place of a young prisoner, her fellow-townsmen, that he ordered his immediate and unconditional release.†

Personal appeals to Charles II. were generally successful. The King's promise, however, was only the first step

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 377.

† Besse, vol. i., p. 662.

towards obtaining the release of the prisoner. Its performance was dependent upon the concurrence of various ranks of officials, whose enmity or procrastination frequently made it of no effect.

A letter written to Margaret Fox during her second imprisonment by one of her sons-in-law describes the efforts made at Court to secure her pardon, and gives some notion of the red tape which surrounded what George Fox calls "a patin (patent?) of releas." The date is April 4th, 1671.

"Last 6th day ye two women tooke the grant out of the Attourney Generals office, and he gave ym his fee, which should have been £5, and his clerke tooke but 20s. whereas his fee was 40s. And yesterday they went with it to ye King who signed it in ye counsell, and Arlington also signed it, but would take noe fees, whereas his fees would have been £12 or £20. Neither would Williamsons man take any thing, saying yt if any religion were true, it is ours. Tomorrow it is to passe ye signet, and on the 6th day the privy seale, and afterwards the broad seale, which may be done on any day."*

The friendly attitude of the Court officials may have been due in some degree to the disgrace of Clarendon and the removal of his influence. The change, unfortunately, had not affected the Parliament, who still dreaded, on the Papists' account, any concession which might be granted to Nonconformists. In 1672 Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence, which was withdrawn in the following year, under pressure from the House.†

On August 13, 1672, Ellis Hookes, the Recording Clerk, wrote a report to Margaret Fox, which is endorsed: "of setting prisoners at liberty."

"G. W. [George Whitehead] and my selfe have been much imployed this summer in the bussines of the prisoners liberty and it is such a troublesome bussines to

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 83; printed also in "Letters of Early Friends," p. 184. London, 1841.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 310.

go through as I have not mett with the like. It lyes now in the Secretary's hand, ready signed by the King, wants only dateing. I have engrossed it once already, and it containes six of the largest Skinns of Parchment I could gett: and I must Engrosse it once more for the Signet Office, and from thence it is to goe to the Crown Office or Pattent Office, and to be engrossed in Chancery hand, where I suppose it will make at least 12 skinns: if wee could once gett it past the signet and privie seale, I hope it would soon be doune. In the meane time wee must attend in patience."*

This "Pardon," as Ellis Hookes states in a subsequent letter, contained the names of about 500 persons imprisoned in several counties. A few non-Friends, including John Bunyan, whose first book, by the way, had been directed against the Quakers,† were released by the same instrument.

Sewel draws attention to the fact that the persecution of Nonconformists continued without abatement to the day of the King's death. If his Restoration had been hailed by them as the beginning of an era of religious liberty, they dreaded the accession of his brother, as the signal for the rekindling of the fires of Smithfield.‡

The one prophecy proved as false as the other. During his brother's life-time, the Duke of York had rested under a cloud of suspicion; he was powerless to direct the currents of Court intrigue which did duty for national policy. Moreover, in spite of his friendship for William Penn, his sympathies had early been alienated from the Quakers by their outspoken horror of Popery.

A conversation which passed between the two brothers in October, 1660, is reported by Sewel, and throws some light upon the Royal attitude towards these troublesome correspondents. The King had received a letter from a Quaker prisoner, which, in the bitterness of fresh dis-

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 54; printed in "Letters of Early Friends," p. 185.

† Braithwaite, p. 286.

‡ Sewel, vol. ii., p. 443.

appointment, spoke very plainly of the "idolatry" which was about to be introduced into England and of the

"abominations and cruelties, which are committed and intended. O Friend," the writer went on, "there hath a pity arose in me towards thee for thy soul's sake; and it hath been my desire, if it might stand with the will of God, that he would put it into thy heart to go out of the land again that so thy life might be preserved, and that thou mightest have time to repent, for although many men flatter and applaud thee for self ends, yet I see the Lord is displeased with thy ways."

Sewel characterizes this letter as "a clear evidence of the author's innocent courage," and goes on to relate that "the King read it, and seemed to be reached thereby, and touched at heart. But his brother, the Duke of York, was displeased with it, and being violently set against the author, advised the King to use severity towards him. But the King, being good-natured, said: 'It were better for us to amend our lives.' " *

This speech is a characteristic example of the easy charm with which Charles, to the day of his death, was able to hoodwink his subjects, and to preserve a popularity unshared by the deeper and more genuine nature of his brother. James, on his part, for all his hard words, was to prove himself a better friend to his Quaker subjects than the Nonconformist Protector himself.

It was with a very faint hope of success that they presented their petition in the first days of his reign. This document, which is given in full by Sewel, is one of the most interesting in the annals of early Quakerism.† Its authors seem to have felt that the statistics at their command were the most eloquent plea which they could put forward, and dispensing with the customary prologue, they plunged at once into numerical details of the "suffering condition of the peaceable people called Quakers."

It had seemed a great thing at Charles II.'s accession

■ Sewel, vol. i., p. 524.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 443.

that 120 Quakers should be lying in prison. But at the date of his death in 1685 there were 1,383 Quaker prisoners in England and Wales, of whom 200 were women. During his reign 220 had died in captivity; 100 had succumbed during the last five years alone, weakened by their long captivity and the exceptional severity of the winters.

The document goes on to relate the sufferings of Friends under the Conventicle Act, and by means of informers.

It gives a list of ten statutes, many of them musty with age, under cover of which the spoiling of the Quakers was being carried on. Five had been revived from the reign of Elizabeth, and one from that of James I., while another dated back to Henry VIII. The document concludes with an appeal to the King to make their case his own, and do to them as he would be done unto—(a somewhat unusual point of view for a judge)—and with a solemn profession of their unshaken loyalty and goodwill towards the King and Government. A list was handed in with this petition, which gave the number of prisoners confined in the various counties. Yorkshire, always a stronghold of Quakerism, heads the list with 279; Devonshire has 104; while the town of Bristol alone stands third with 103.

The petition made some stir in Parliament and in London generally. Its circumstantial statements could hardly fail to arouse the popular sympathy, yet for a while it seemed that mercy, or rather justice, was to be stifled for the sake of expediency. The new King was an avowed Roman Catholic, and any favour shown to Dissenters would inevitably be converted into universal toleration. But while Parliament hesitated to repeal the laws under which they suffered, the King, acting no doubt upon the advice of William Penn, took the law into his own hands. He issued a proclamation in his own name, ordering the release of all prisoners of proved loyalty who were in prison for not taking the oath, and also of those prisoners who had been condemned for conscientious scruples by the Ecclesiastical Courts. All proceedings of a similar

nature were stayed by this proclamation, which put an immediate stop to the persecution, and broke the power of the informers.

During the short three years of his reign James seems to have gone out of his way to show favour to the Quakers. He may have been actuated by pure humanity, or, as seems most probable, he was using the Friends as a cover for his design to obtain liberty of conscience for the Roman Catholics. There can be no doubt that his motive in relieving the Friends from the obligation of the oath was to prepare the way for the general repeal of the Test Act. Even the long-vexed question of "taking-off ye hatt" was solved by his condescension. He forbade his servants to molest the Quakers who approached his presence with their hats upon their heads, and on one occasion removed his own hat before a Quaker countryman and carried it under his arm. "You do not know the custom," he explained to his astonished visitor, "for that requires that but one hat must be on here."*

The benefits which arose from James's proclamation were so great, and his protection so effectual, that the addresses presented to him by the Friends were free from the bitter complaints and prophecies of judgment whose perusal had become a matter of routine with his predecessor. As William Penn remarked in a speech accompanying an Address of Thanks to King James :

"As our sufferings would have moved stones to compassion, so we should be harder, if we were not moved to gratitude."†

Until the Revolution of 1688, however, their relief rested solely upon the precarious ground of the King's proclamation, and no law for insuring religious liberty was passed by the Parliament, lest it should be found impossible to exclude the Roman Catholics from its privileges. Moreover, as Sewel shrewdly remarked, even

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 482.

† *Ibid.*, p. 477.

if James had not been baulked of his avowed purpose to secure to all men the liberty of their consciences, "he should not have been able to make it continue longer than the Popish clergy would have thought it convenient." The King's insistence on the publication of his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience proved, indeed, to be the rock on which he split—the seven Bishops refusing to obey his order, not, so they declared, out of lack of loyalty, nor want of due tenderness to Dissenters, but because they doubted the legality of the King's dispensing power.

It was not until 1689, in the first Parliament of William and Mary, that a Bill was passed by Parliament for exempting Protestant Dissenters from the penal laws under which they had suffered. This was the famous Act of Toleration, which placed the Quakers once for all beyond the reach of persecution (excepting only the exaction of tithes), while by the inclusion of the word Protestant it excluded any necessity of relief to the Roman Catholics.

For the convenience of the Quakers, a Declaration of Loyalty was formulated to take the place of the Oath of Allegiance; and a further safeguard was provided by their subscription to a second document, attesting their orthodoxy and their abhorrence of Socinianism.

At the death of George Fox in 1691 two weapons alone survived out of the dread armoury of persecution—the Test Act, which rendered it impossible for a Quaker to take high office under the State, and the old and bitterly contested injustice of the payment of tithes to the clergy.

CHAPTER V

MARY FISHER: A SERVANT-GIRL APOSTLE TO THE COLLEGES

IF romance, like laughter, is the child of sudden glory, the figure of Mary Fisher is the most romantic in the early Quaker annals. First known as a servant-girl in Yorkshire, she died in Carolina, in her own house, bequeathing real and personal estate and a black slave to her heirs. Unmarried at thirty-nine, she died at seventy-five, a widow for the second time, leaving two daughters and a son behind her. She was the first Quaker apostle to the colleges, and headed the long list of heroic sufferers who were publicly flogged in England for their religion. She, too, with an older woman, was the pioneer who brought the Friends' doctrine to New England in 1656, and tasted the first-fruits of the persecution which was meted out to her fellow-believers, even to the extremes of mutilation and death, by those who were themselves the survivors of the *Mayflower*. Then, carrying the gospel into Turkey, she spoke face to face with the Sultan, and was treated by him and his subjects with every refinement of courtesy and kindness.

Mary Fisher was one of many servants who were "convinced" in company with their master and mistress, the conversion of an entire household being a common feature of early Quakerism. Servants of the seventeenth century occupied a position of trust and intimacy almost unknown in our time. Pepys' Diary bears frequent evidence to the share taken by the mistress's "woman" in the family pleasures and pursuits. As in the case of Fox's visit to

Swarthmoor Hall, the servants were admitted with the children to share the ministrations of the travelling preacher. Thus on Ellwood's second visit to the Peningtons, who had lately become Friends, he records :

"After Supper, the Evenings being long, the Servants of the Family (who were Quakers) were called in, and we all sat down in Silence."*

It was advisable, and indeed necessary, in those days of paid informers, that a Quaker family should have Quaker servants. But their qualities of sobriety, truth, and faithfulness were appreciated outside the immediate circle of their fellow-believers. A significant sentence occurs in a letter written in 1675, by Lady Conway, the daughter of Heneage Finch, the late Speaker—a learned and hypochondriacal lady, and a friend of William Penn :

"I am changing my two maids into Quakers ; for if they prove what they seem to be, lovers of quiett and retirement, they will fitt the circumstances I am in (yt cannot endure any noise) better than others."†

Yet there were obvious disadvantages in the engagement of a Quaker servant. A favourite text with the early Friends was the promise recorded by the prophet Joel : "Upon thy servants and upon thy handmaidens will I pour out of my Spirit"; and it was frequently fulfilled with a literalness disturbing to a well-regulated household. After the visit of Fox to Swarthmoor, the steward and the two maids became travelling preachers, and were scattered far and wide to preach the Gospel. John Camm also lost two servants at the time of his own conviction, Jane and Dorothy Waugh joining the ranks of the women evangelists.

William Caton, the young apostle of Holland, wrote an interesting letter to Fox from Amsterdam, in the beginning of 1660, which shows very clearly the inconveniences of

* "Life of Thomas Ellwood," p. 18.

† Quoted in the *Journal* of the Friends' Historical Society, 1910.

the case, both to mistress and maid. He enclosed a note from "Elizabeth Cox," asking Fox's advice upon her project of going to "High-Duchland." The duty of this mission was impressed upon her, but she shrank from undertaking it, and hoped that Fox might show her some reason for not going. The obvious objection of the impossibility of communicating with the inhabitants would not occur to either, relying as they did upon the gift of "tongues":

"The maid that writes this is she that was with Hester Biddle in the Straites. She hath bene here, I suppose, A year, and hath been serviceable in A place as a Servant, but hath long given ffriends to understand (to witt, those with whom she lived) yt they should not relye upon her, for she knew not how little A time she should stay with them &c. whereupon they have provided Another. It being such A place of trust and charg as that they have need of one in whom they may confide and upon whom they may relye and depend. Soe that she hath (as it were) excluded herselfe out of the place in which she carryed herselfe well. And now seemes this thing to be settled in her of which she hath writt to thee. And it will be very needfull that thou write A word to her about it."*

Fox's message had found an entrance into Selby, where Mary Fisher was in service, before he himself came to the town, in December, 1651. John Leake, one of the principal townspeople, had been one of his many visitors in the prison at Derby in the previous year, and had become a Friend. At his house Fox now left his horse,

"not knowing what to doe with him: ffor I was moved to goe to many great houses to admonish ym and to exhorte ym to turn to ye Lorde."†

It was probably under these exhortations that Richard Tomlinson, with his wife and their maid, Mary Fisher of Pontefract, were won over to the Quakers. A close bond was then formed between Fox and his young convert.

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 270.

† Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 17.

Although twelve months his senior, she looked upon him henceforth as her "deare Father," and prayed that she might not be forgotten of him.

Nearly a year later, William Dewsbury, one of the most eloquent of the Quaker ministers, lodged at Tomlinson's house on his first missionary journey. His hostess, convinced at the time of Fox's visit, was now so filled with the inspiration of the message, that it drove her also up and down the streets of Selby, calling "Woe" and "Repentance."* But Mary Fisher was no longer in the house to encourage her mistress, having already been lodged for some months in York Castle, on the charge of "speaking to a priest"—her own parish minister.

It seems to have been usual for servant preachers to return to their situations in the intervals of public work. Mary Fisher, however, had said good-bye to the old life, and came back no more to Selby.

Her first imprisonment in York Castle lasted for sixteen months—a confinement mercifully tempered to the novice by the companionship of many of the most noted Quaker preachers.

Thomas Aldam, formerly a Seeker, had been one of Fox's first Yorkshire converts, and was thrown into prison in July of this year, 1652, while on a missionary journey with him in the West Riding.† Here, too, was Elizabeth Hooton, the first woman preacher among the Quakers, whose influence may be traced in Mary's further activities; and Jane Holmes, fresh from her victories and sufferings at Malton, was shortly brought into the castle, sickening for a fever. It may have been during these months of enforced idleness that Mary learned to write the excellent, if crabbed, hand, which appears occasionally amongst the Swarthmoor MSS. Her first known effort at composition, which consists of a couple of lines addressed to her persecutors, "Woe now to the unjust

* Braithwaite, p. 74.

† Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 37.

judge," is in the style and almost in the words of her fellow-prisoner, Elizabeth Hooton.*

Mary was released in the autumn of 1653, and with a companion, Elizabeth Williams, she started at once upon a mission into the Fen country, where old Elizabeth Hooton had suffered her first imprisonment "for preachinge ye gospell." Mary Fisher was now about thirty years of age and, as on a later occasion, she chose a woman of fifty for her companion. In December they arrived at Cambridge, "in the same month," so the contemporary chronicler remarks, with a suspicion of irony, "wherein Oliver Cromwell had assumed the title of Protector."†

The bitterness which was mutually felt by "priests" and Quakers concentrated itself around the houses of learning. A violent controversy was waged on paper between the leading divines and Fox himself, and was shared in by most of his prominent followers. But until the date of Mary Fisher's visit no Friend had ventured his person into the lion's den.

The early Quakers had the contempt for "carnal wisdom" natural in those who could boast direct inspiration. Their attitude in this case, as in many others, had been anticipated by more than half a century in the teachings of the Congregationalists. In 1590 Henry Barrow condemned the Universities in the "seditious" book for which he suffered martyrdom—"A Brief Discovery of the False Churches."

"Colleges," he wrote, and the vehemence of his language forestalls the Quaker controversialists, "are the very hives and nurseries of these armed locusts and venomous scorpions and teaching priests."‡

In 1650, though the Church of England had been deposed from its authority, the Puritan colleges were still

* A. R. B. MSS., 173.

† Besse, vol. i., p. 84.

‡ Quoted in "The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," by Robert Barclay, pp. 48, 49. London, 1876.

in Fox's eyes little more than an institution for the manufacture of "hireling priests." When he rode through the streets of Cambridge in the year following Mary Fisher's visit, he had no difficulty in explaining **the** hostility of the scholars :

"For they knew I was soe against there trade: which they were there as Apprentices to learne ye trade of preachinge, yt they raged as bad as ever Dianas Craftsmen did against Paul."*

His attitude towards the Universities was clearly shown in his attempt to dissuade the Protector and his emissary from establishing a college in Durham :

"Soe I and some others went to ye man and reasoned with him, and lett him see yt was not ye way to make ym Christs ministers by Hebrew greeke and latine and ye 7 arts, which all was but ye teachinges of ye naturall man. . . . For wee shewed him further Itt was Christ yt made his ministers and gave gifts unto ym."†

During the reign of Charles I. Cambridge enjoyed the reputation of being "more sober" than Oxford, and was the University commonly chosen for their sons by the religious-minded Puritans. St. Katherine's Hall was a Puritan, almost a theological, college. Milton had studied at Christ's, and Oliver Cromwell at Sidney Sussex, which was a school of Nonconformist doctrine, and was nicknamed, together with Emmanuel, "the nursery of Puritanism."‡

Whether by accident or design, it was to the undergraduates of Sidney Sussex College that the two humble and unlearned women addressed their discourse.

Besse's chronicler has preserved a singularly vivid account of this incident, from which it appears that the students were content at first to mock their visitors, and

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 190.

† *Ibid.*, p. 311.

‡ Article on Cambridge in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," ninth edition.

perplex them with foolish questions. But Quaker preachers were not easily terrified or abashed.

“The Women, observing the Froth and Levity of their Behaviour, told them they were Antichrists, and that their College was a Cage of unclean Birds, and the Synagogue of Satan.”

These phrases may have been suggested to Mary Fisher by Barrow's indictment of the colleges—“if the tree be known by the fruit, and the nest by the birds.” Coined now by her, they were to obtain a flattering currency in Quaker pamphlets upon the subject. Beaten off the field by their plain-spoken adversaries, the cowardly youths summoned the law to their aid.

“Complaint was forthwith made to William Pickering, then Mayor, that two Women were preaching. He sent a Constable for them, and examined them, whence they came, and where they lay last night?”

The Elizabethan law for the “Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars,” had been recently revived, but in no case as yet had it been applied to the travelling Quakers. These questions, as the women seem to have recognized, were intended by the Mayor to bring them within the scope of that medieval Act.

“They answered, that they were Strangers, and knew not the Name of the Place, but paid for what they had, and came away. He asked their names: They replied, their Names were written in the Book of Life. He demanded their husbands names. They told him: they had no Husband but Jesus Christ, and he sent them. Upon this the Mayor grew angry, called them Whores, and issued his Warrant to the Constable to whip them at the Market-Cross till the Blood ran down their Bodies: and ordered three of his Serjeants to see that Sentence, equally cruel and lawless, severely executed.”

The market-place, according to Evelyn, who saw it eight months later, was “very ample, and remarkable for old Hobson the pleasant carrier's beneficence of a

fountain." This was Milton's "Hobson the Carrier," whose conduit, half frozen over on this December day, was now to be put to so strange a use, in the refreshment of the Quaker sufferers, and the washing of their wounds.

"The poor Women, kneeling down, in Christian Meekness besought the Lord to forgive him, for that he knew not what he did. So they were led to the Market-Cross, calling upon God to strengthen their faith. The Executioner commanded them to put off their Clothes, which they refused. Then he stripped them naked to the Waste, put their Arms into the Whipping-post, and executed the Mayor's Warrant far more cruelly than is usually done to the worst of Malefactors, so that their Flesh was miserably cut and torn. The Constancy and Patience which they expressed under this barbarous Usage was astonishing to the Beholders, for they endured the cruel Torture without the least Change of Countenance or Appearance of Uneasiness, and in the midst of their Punishment sang and rejoiced, saying: The Lord be blessed, the Lord be praised, who hath thus honoured us, and strengthened us thus to suffer for his Name's sake." ("And when all was done," adds another account, "they said to the Executioner: If you think you have not done enough, we are here ready to suffer more for our Saviour Christ.")* "After which they kneeled down, and like the Proto-Martyr Stephen, prayed God to forgive their Persecutors, for they knew not what they had done. As they were led back into the Town they exhorted the People to fear God, not Man, telling them this was but the Beginning of the Sufferings of the People of God—A Praediction which was verified by the Sequel of what their Friends in that Place afterward underwent. Then were they thrust out of the Town, no Man daring to shew them any Countenance, or give them any Relief, for though many did secretly commiserate their Case, yet none had Courage to oppose the Current of popular Prejudice, and the misapplied Power of the Magistrate."†

* "The First New Persecution, or a True Narrative of the Cruel Usage of two Christians by the present Mayor of Cambridge," etc. London, 1654.

† Besse, vol. i., pp. 84, 85.

This was the first time that the punishment of flogging had been executed upon the Quakers, and the report sent a shudder through the country not yet hardened to the spectacle. The justices of the town were moved to the unusual course of drawing up and signing a memorial in which they repudiated all share in the Mayor's action.

"These are to give notice to all Men, that none of the justices of the Town had any hand in this barbarous and unlawful Act, saving Mr. William Pickering, Mayor."

The Friends themselves published the cruel story in a pamphlet—"The First New Persecution"—while Nayler, in his book, "The Churches Gathered against Christ," drew the most pointed justification for his title from the experiences of Mary Fisher at Cambridge.

As Quakerism took root in the town, Friends continued to suffer by the violence of the undergraduates, who, finding that they met with no resistance, raided their meetings, and subjected the members, both men and women, to every ingenuity of insult.* But the authorities, as a whole, remained friendly. On his visit in 1655 Fox found the Mayor eager to shelter him from the rage of the students and townspeople, and held a "fine meetinge" in his house.† When William Simpson, about the year 1657, walked stark naked through the streets as a sign, "the Mayor of Cambridge," says Fox, "put his gown about him, being sensible there was something in the thing."‡ One of the Aldermen, James Blackley by name, who had doubtless signed the paper of protest against Mary Fisher's punishment, became one of the staunchest of Quaker members; while his wife earned a reproof for "excess of zeal" from two of the travelling preachers, and expiated her fault by three months' imprisonment in the Tolbooth.

If the Quaker message could only be regarded in the Universities as the babbling of insolent fanatics, the

* Braithwaite, pp. 295 *et seq.* † Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 190.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 2; Portfolio xvii. 96.

choice of its messengers seemed to be dictated by the very perverseness of unsuitability. Fox trusted his missionaries to the guidance of the Inward Light, and unless his advice was definitely sought, he exercised little or no supervision upon their movements. The responsibility of the Fund for the Service of Truth ceased with the payment of their expenses.

Far from acting as a deterrent to her sisters in the ministry, Mary Fisher's shameful sufferings proved an inspiration to like service. Six months after the expulsion of the pioneers from Cambridge, two young women, Elizabeth Fletcher and Elizabeth Leavens, were moved to visit the University of Oxford.

The account rendered to Margaret Fell of "monies disbursed since 1.5.54" contains the two items: "For E. Levens clotheinge £1. 3s., Eliz. fletcher Hatt 2s. 4d."*

Elizabeth Fletcher was only fifteen years old, but she had reached an age at which many of her contemporaries were already wives and mothers. Before undertaking this journey she had travelled as "an able minister of the Gospel through many parts of the nation." The writer of the Kendal Chronicle, in the "First Publishers of Truth," speaks of her as "a virtuous maid of considerable family," though it appears from the account-books that her means did not allow her "to travel upon her own purse."

Elizabeth Leavens, who was also a native of Kendal, came of more humble parentage than her companion. But her various appearances in the Quaker records present her as a most attractive personality, affectionate and impulsive to a degree which called for censure from her grave superiors in the work.

In June, 1654, the two girls arrived in Oxford, and set themselves deliberately to drink to the dregs the bitter cup which Mary Fisher and Elizabeth Williams had tasted at Cambridge. Preaching at first through the

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 208.

streets, they soon penetrated into the colleges, and began to exhort the undergraduates to repentance. The scenes which followed were such as to rouse the old chronicler from his laconic style:

"They suffered," he says, "by the black tribe of scholars, as also the Magistrates, as is almost a shame to relate, considering the place and the persons that acted it upon two innocent comely young maids."

Free from all restraint by the magistrates, who were themselves shortly to vie with them in cruelty, the students, backed by the townsmen, abandoned themselves to an orgy of horse-play and shameful abuse. Crowding round "little Elizabeth Fletcher," they pushed her against a gravestone, and then flung her into an open grave. Afterwards, tying the two girls together, they drove them under a pump, and dragged them, drenched and bruised as they were, through a wet ditch.

Elizabeth Fletcher's childish body was so weakened and injured by this rough handling that the remainder of her short life was one struggle with pain and weariness, although for three out of its four years she continued to preach and travel. It seems that her mind also was unhinged for the moment by her cruel sufferings. She brooded over the thought of the hypocrisy of the students of religion who had thus abused her—fledgling priests, Presbyterians and Independents. She prophesied that "the Lord would strip them of this Profession, so that their nakedness should appear"; and then, as the manner of the Quakers was, she proceeded to drive home the prophecy by a sign.

"Although the said E. F. was a very modest grave young woman, yet contrary to her own Will or Inclination, in Obedience to the Lord, went naked through the streets of that City, as a Sign against that hypocritical profession they made there."*

* Thomas Camm's account of Elizabeth Fletcher in "First Publishers of Truth," p. 259.

It was probably by this action, so tragically ill-suited to the place and circumstances, that the young preachers first aroused the resentment of the magistrates. Going into a church on Sunday morning, they began to address the congregation when the service was ended. But two justices who were present ordered their removal to the Bocardo, that ill-omened fortress, from whose walls, one hundred years before, Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer had come forth to the stake.

The Mayor of Oxford, in pleasing contrast to his brother of Cambridge, refused to have any hand in their imprisonment or trial, even offering to provide them with food, clothes or money, if they were in need. He was present—the one dissentient voice—at their examination, which was conducted by the Vice-Chancellor of the University. This was the learned Dr. Owen, afterwards the mark of Quaker controversialists, who, with some justice, held him responsible for the outrages which continued to be perpetrated in Oxford against their fellow-believers. A month from the date when he condemned a couple of girls to be flogged for preaching, there is a glimpse in Evelyn's Diary of another side of his activities. Early in July of 1654 the Diarist went to Oxford to be present at the "Act," and on the 9th of the month he listened to a sermon "from the famous Independent, Dr. Owen, perstringeing [*i.e.*, touching upon] Episcopacy." The Vice-Chancellor, it seems, was much preoccupied that summer in defending the Church against schismatics, whether Episcopalian or Quaker.

His charge to the prisoners, which was probably put forward in all honesty, was, "That they blasphemed the name of God, and did abuse the Spirit of God, and dishonoured the grace of Christ." The examination which followed was brief and one-sided. The prisoners having maintained that they read the Scriptures, the question was put whether they did not learn there to be obedient to the power of the magistrate?—a power, as they might have

retorted, which had been chiefly conspicuous by its inactivity during their stay in Oxford.

"To which," says Sewel, "their answer was, They were obedient to the power of God, and to the power that was of God they were subject for conscience sake. Well, said the Vice-Chancellor, you profane the Word of God, and I fear you know not God, though you so much speak of him."

After this crushing reprimand, the culprits were removed, and the question of their punishment debated by the assembled authorities. It was agreed that a paper should be drawn up, ordering the young girls to be whipped out of the city. A temporary stop was put, however, to its execution, by the refusal of the Mayor to append his signature. After some discussion, the justices agreed to accept the whole responsibility.

Next morning the cruel scene was witnessed in Oxford, which had been enacted six months before for the edification of the Cambridge students, with this difference only, that the executioner performed his part "with much unwillingness: and the Mayor had no hand in it."*

With a mind smarting under these indignities, and a body unhealed of its wounds, "little Elizabeth Fletcher" set out upon her mission to Ireland.

Meanwhile, Mary Fisher, after a short interval of freedom, had returned to her prison in York. Within a couple of months of her visit to Cambridge, Thomas Aldam, himself still confined in the Castle, was writing to Margaret Fell:

"Mary ffisher, my fellow-laborer in the Lord . . . (is) in outward bonds with mee again in prison . . . for speaking to a Preist at Pontefrett (her native town) soe-called."

His comment, written as it was shortly after her flogging at Cambridge, throws an interesting side-light upon the

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 168; Besse, vol. i., pp. 562, 563.

uses of persecution : " She is much growne in the power since her last Imprisonment."

Another former fellow-prisoner, Jane Holmes, was present to welcome her return, and the two girls agreed to share a private room let by the gaoler to his involuntary lodgers. Very soon, however, Mary Fisher had no money to pay the rent which he demanded, and refused to accept it from the Quaker Fund, or " to be chargeable to any." At the time of Aldam's writing, the two young women had been turned out of their cell by the gaoler, who hoped for more remunerative guests, and were sharing the common prison in the Castle Garth, with " sixty or more Dutchmen." These were, no doubt, prisoners of war, taken in the naval battles which were being fought between Blake and Van Tromp since the previous year.

For a while Thomas Aldam, whose offers of help had been rejected by Mary Fisher, was content to be a spectator of her discomfort. Then, as he ingenuously relates, a voice came to him, " Wherefore art thou in this roome, and thy life trampleinge upon in ye streets? It is because of thy money "—a cryptic sentence, from which he deduced the practical lesson that his spiritual life was suffering from the luxury of a private cell, when his fellow-believers were destitute and outcast. Without hesitation, he gave away all his money, and joined them in the Castle Garth. His arrival was the signal for an instant improvement in their treatment. The spectacle of his self-sacrifice so moved " the rude souldiers and ruder people " that they ceased to molest his companions, while the hostile gaolers " fledd before us." At last the meekness and mutual love of the Quaker prisoners won the hearts of the head gaoler and his wife, so that " in much tendernesse they provided them with rooms " free of cost ; for, as Aldam confesses, he had so great a dread of the snare in which he had lately been entangled, that " it is my condiçon at the present yt I have not freedome to meddle with Exchange of Money."*

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 42.

It may have been after this experience that Mary Fisher wrote her undated warning to Friends "not to lay up for the Future," with its characteristic injunction: "That ye may receive your bread day by day, never desire to have more in your disposing than you have present need of."*

Their common imprisonment was the beginning of a lasting friendship between herself and Thomas Aldam, and it was to him, amongst others, that she wrote the account of her visit to the Sultan in 1658, "for you have been often in my remembrance since I departed from you."

The year 1655 marked the beginning of that extraordinary foreign missionary activity which was one of the chief preoccupations of early Quakerism. In the winter months a mission was organized to carry the message to America. As at Cambridge, so now in New England, Mary Fisher was to be the pioneer of the new Gospel. Anne Austin, her companion, was, again, "a woman well stricken in years," and the mother of five children.†

They called first at Barbados, and seem to have been well received by the settlers. Mary's letter to Fox, written on January 30, 1656, is evidence of their success, as well as of the tender relationship which subsisted between him and his young convert. Short and terse, like all her letters, it may be quoted in full:

"My deare father—lett mee not bee forgotten of thee but lett thy praerse bee for mee that I may continue faithfull to the end if aney of our friendes bee free to com over thay may bee servisabell here is many convinsed and many desire to know the way soe I rest thy child begotten into the truth by that which is eternall, known to the worlld by the name of Mary ffisher."‡

The sufferings which the Pilgrim Fathers had endured before their departure from England did not dispose them

* A. R. B. MSS., i. 165.

† Gerard Croese's "History of the Quakers," vol. ii., p. 124. London, 1696.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 193.

to a general liberty of conscience. Rather, they set themselves to preserve by every means in their power that purity of religion which they had won at so great a cost. Moreover, the venomous anti-Quaker pamphlets which had been circulated at home had reached New England in advance of any living exponent of Fox's doctrine. When, in the month of May, 1656, Mary Fisher and Anne Austin arrived in the Bay before Boston, the authorities were prepared to go to any extremity to prevent the introduction of their "very dangerous, heretical, and blasphemous opinions."

Governor Endicott being absent, the Deputy-Governor Bellingham showed the anxiety of a zealous underling to forestall his master's policy. As a preliminary precaution, he ordered the women to be kept close prisoners on the ship, while their trunks were searched for undesirable literature. Meanwhile he summoned a special council of the magistrates of Boston, and the threefold sentence which they passed upon the Quakers gives some measure of the consternation aroused by their intrusion.

All the "corrupt books," to the number of a hundred, found in their possession were to be burnt by the hangman.

"The said Anne and Mary" were to be kept in close confinement, without possibility of outside intercourse, until such time as they could be banished from the country. Although no law had been passed as yet against the Quakers as such, the two women were committed to prison under a mittimus as Quakers, on the sufficient proof that one of them, speaking to Bellingham, had addressed him as "thou" instead of "you."

Kemphthorn, the shipmaster, who was the innocent cause of these alarms, was condemned to carry the prisoners back to Barbados at his own expense, paying also the charges of their imprisonment in Boston, and giving for security a bond of £100.

The enforced failure of their mission was a heavy

burden for the prisoners; but a more active suffering was in store for them. Until the ship which had brought them was ready to return, Mary and Anne were confined in Boston prison. Any inhabitant of the town who should attempt to communicate with them was threatened with a fine of £5, a threat rendered somewhat superfluous by the boarding-up of the prisoners' window, and their deprivation of paper and ink.* But they were to be exposed to a more horrible danger than that of detention or banishment.

The literal acceptance of the Old Testament by the Puritans as their working model had involved them, amongst more desirable survivals, in a belief in the sword as the first weapon of a missionary, and a continuance of the practice of capital punishment for witchcraft. The seventeenth century showed a remarkable increase in the prosecution of witches. During the two years 1645-1647 between two and three hundred were indicted in two counties of England alone, of whom more than half were convicted.† In 1665, during the trial of the two Suffolk witches, Lord Chief Justice Hale gave his memorable pronouncement to the jury:

"That there are such creatures as witches I make no doubt at all; for, first, the Scriptures have affirmed so much; secondly, the wisdom of all nations hath provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime."‡

The Government of New England had carried on the same tradition. Seven years before Mary Fisher's visit the first execution for witchcraft had taken place in Boston. An abstract of the laws of New England, which was printed in 1655, immediately before her arrival, con-

* Bowden's "History of the Friends in America," vol. i., pp. 34, 35.

† State Trials, quoted in the article on Witchcraft in the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

‡ Quoted in Buckle's "History of Civilization in England," vol. i., p. 295.

tained two articles providing for the death of convicted witches, and the suitable punishment of those who had consulted them. The sister-in-law of Deputy-Governor Bellingham himself had been the first to suffer under the new code. Her execution was fresh in men's minds when the cry of witchcraft was raised against the two defenceless strangers from England.

A close verbal examination failed to substantiate the charge. Then followed the ignominious searching of their naked bodies for the recognized signs of traffic with the devil or his imps. It would have gone hard with the women if any strange mole or birth-mark had rewarded the pains of the searchers. But again the persecutors were foiled of their designs.* Seeing the prisoners about to escape from their clutches, the magistrates, as a last resort, refused to supply them with food, or to sanction their provision by the citizens of Boston; but one old inhabitant, Nicholas Upsall, seeing them about to perish by starvation, persuaded the gaoler, by a bribe of 5s. a week, to allow him to introduce food into the prison. This captivity lasted five weeks; then their vessel, the *Swallow*, being ready to sail, they were put on board, and carried back to Barbados. They left their beds and their Bible behind them in the prison as payment for their "entertainment," as it was called—some difficulty having apparently been found in enforcing this charge upon Captain Kempthorn.†

At the beginning of September they were still in Barbados. Henry Fell, a newly arrived missionary from the North of England, wrote on the third of the month to his namesake Margaret, giving a short account of his meeting with the two women, and of their sufferings in Boston, which he had heard from their own lips. His concluding paragraph is a welcome proof that their long journey had not been taken altogether in vain:

* Bowden's "History," vol. i., p. 32 *et seq.*

† Sewel's "History," vol. i., p. 295; Besse, vol. ii., pp. 177, 178.

"Truly Mary Fisher is a pretious heart, and hath been very serviceable here; so likewise have John Rous" (a rich planter's son, newly convinced) "and Peter Head" (a missionary from England), "and the Lord hath given a blessing to their labours, . . . for here are many people convinced of the Truth . . . which meet together in silence, in three severall places in the Island."■

The return journey of the two women may be traced in the Missionaries' Accounts for the year 1656. It is characteristic of Mary Fisher that the sum set to her name is scarcely more than a quarter that paid for her companion. She would not willingly be "chargeable to any."

"For Ann Austin's passage backe from Barbados £8. 6. 0
For part of M. Fisher's pasage back from Barbados paid £2. 4. 6."

Ann Austin, being an old woman, seems to have travelled no more on Friends' account. A glimpse of her later life in England is given lower on the same page:

"For cloaths for Ann Austine when she
went to keep Sam: Fisher'(s) house ... £3. 1. 0."†

Samuel Fisher, a new and interesting convert, was shortly to take rank among the foremost Quaker controversialists, through his disputes with Dr. Owen, the already familiar Vice-Chancellor of Oxford. His home was at Lydd, in Kent; but in 1658 he travelled in the footsteps of Perrot and Luffe on a mission into Italy,‡ and it appears that Anne Austin, whose services were no longer required as his housekeeper, returned to her home in London. In 1659 she was imprisoned in one of the London gaols for no greater crime than speaking in a Quaker meeting. She died a victim to the Great Plague in 1665, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.§

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 66.

† *Ibid.*, i. 397.

‡ Braithwaite, pp. 288, 426.

§ Bowden's "History," vol. i., p. 41.

For Mary Fisher, on the contrary, this journey to Boston, discouraging as it might well have been, proved only the beginning of missionary venture. She returned to England with her companion, but in less than a year she had set out again on that most memorable of Quaker enterprises, the mission to the Grand Turk.

CHAPTER VI

A MAIDEN AMBASSADOR TO THE GRAND TURK

IN the first decade of Quaker history, when every believer became a missionary, and, if possible, a missionary in foreign lands, a General Fund was instituted by Margaret Fell "For the Service of Truth Abroad." The accounts of this Fund were rendered to her, and still exist in manuscript. A piece of advice, interpolated in the columns of figures, shows the place which foreign missions held in the hearts of the little community, struggling as they were, in the face of barbarous persecution, for a foothold in their native land:

"The less that anie hath given that travills in this nation the better, seeing the charge may bee great for those yt are imprisoned and goe into other countries."*

Again and again, amidst the meticulous and crabbed entries of

"A paire of showes to a friend poore, 1s. 10d.

"Wastecoate, peticoate, makeinge and furnishing, 19s. 2d."

there lurks a name steeped in old romance, or a window opens upon some far-away vista of travel and adventure. Here are contributions—"for the distressed people in France"; amounts paid for journeys to and from Barbados, Spain, Jerusalem; collections taken for the ransom of a preacher and his son, captured by the Barbary corsairs, and in slavery at Algiers, and the crowning sum of

"£47 10s. ffor the friends yt went to Venus"!

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 238.

The more arduous the way, the more fearful the reputation of the people to whom these missionaries travelled, the more clearly shone the beckoning finger. Not even the veil of legend could keep a land inviolate from their attempts. George Fox, who was in constant, if one-sided, correspondence with the "pope and papishes," and in 1652 had written a letter "To the World," followed by a second, "To all the Nations under the Whole Heavens," addressed himself in 1660 to the mythical "Prester John." About the same time two other preachers, despairing, after repeated disappointment, of reaching him in person, aimed an epistle in Latin and English at the elusive potentate:

"Pro Presbytero Johanne, ac Omnibus ejus Regibus et Principibus subordinatis a Populo Dei in Anglia vocato Anglice Quakers."*

Prester John had one rival in the imagination of Europe, and in the trembling affection of her nurseries. The Sultan of Turkey possessed the advantage of a corporeal presence—his words had been reported by English Ambassadors, and his conventional portrait, swinging over the doors of English inns since the time of the Crusades, had familiarized the "Turk's Head" in the eyes of successive generations. In the days of the Stuarts he was at the height of his power. Like Napoleon two centuries later, he constituted a perpetual menace to the peace of Europe, and his armies were equally feared on sea or land. The titles which he assumed in writing to the Emperor of Germany in 1663 were not exaggerated beyond the legitimate licence of such documents:

"Mahomet, sone of the Emperour, sone of God, thrice heavenly and thrice known as the renowned Emperour of the Turks, King of Greece, Macedonia, and Moldavia, King of Samaria and Hungary, King of Greater and Lesser Egypt, King of all the inhabitants of the Earth and the Earthly Paradise, Guardian of the Sepulchre of

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 8, and note on p. 380.

thy God, Lord of the Tree of Life, Lord of all the Emperours of the World from the East even to the West, King of all Kings, Grand Persecutor of the Christians and all the Wicked, the Joy of the Flourishing Tree, the Cheaftan and Guardian of thy Crucified God, Lord of the Hope of thy Nation."*

Such blasphemous pretensions aroused the pity and zeal of every Quaker missionary. Time after time, as we learn from the old Account Books, a little band was equipped for "Turkij," only to be intercepted and sent home by some English Ambassador or Consul along the route. More than once in Thurloe's State Papers one hears the echo of a *cri du cœur* from one of these long-suffering officials, whose business it was to watch over the safety of their travelling fellow-countrymen. The professional point of view is indicated in a warrant from the Earl of Winchelsea, the English Ambassador at Constantinople, to the Consul at Smyrna, directing him to ship two Quakers home—

"because we sufficiently have had Experience, that the carriage of that sort of people is ridiculous, and is capable to bring dishonour to our Nation, besides other inconveniences, that may redound to them in particular, and to the English in generall."†

Alone successful of all these baffled messengers, alone even of those who set out with her, Mary Fisher made her way on foot to the Court at Adrianople, and spoke face to face with the "Grand Seignior." Fresh from her cruel experiences at Boston, "she would not be at rest," says the old historian Croese, "before she went in person to the Great Emperor of the Turks, and informed him concerning the Errors of his religion and the Truth of hers." Joining a little band of missionaries, she set out from England in the early summer of 1657.

* Quoted in "The Diary of John Nicoll, from 1650-1667"; printed from the original MS. in the Advocates' Library, 1836.

† Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio xvii. 78.

The party consisted originally of three men—Perrot, Luffe, and Buckley, all of them Irish—and three women, of whom Mary Fisher was one. While her two women companions are known to history by nothing but name, the fame of Luffe and Perrot is as widespread as that of Quakerism itself, through the misfortunes of the one and the faults of the other.

Perrot had been convinced during the mission of Burrough and Howgill to Ireland, and left a wife and children behind him in Waterford when he started upon this disastrous journey. Luffe, whose conversion dated probably from the same period, returned no more to his home, but was hanged in Rome by the Inquisition—the one proved case of the murder of a Quaker at their hands. Perrot, scarcely more fortunate than his companion, escaped with shaken wits from his imprisonment in Bedlam, and his subsequent history is summed up by William Penn in a sentence whose quaint reproachfulness gives some measure of the injury which he had accomplished:

“If he had been as faithful as his companion, he might with him have been hanged at Rome, to his own comfort, the Truth’s honour, and the Church’s peace.”

Immediately on his return his disloyal spirit showed itself in the disputing of Fox’s authority, and the opposition of his established meetings. In 1662 he was already set down by one of Margaret Fell’s correspondents as “a mere enchanter, a dark-spirited man.” Five years later he shook the Quaker community to its foundations through the absurd controversy “Of Putting off ye Hatt.” He advocated the retaining of the hat, not only before man, but before God—a counsel of impiety which drew even his old travelling companion, Mary Fisher, into the lists of his pamphleteering antagonists.

This tragic history was little suspected by himself or by his fellow-missionaries, who gladly placed themselves under his escort.

The voyage must have been tedious, and was but begun when the vessel had passed the Straits of Gibraltar. Day after day, for four or even five weeks, she followed the low line of the African coast, while only a cluster of white huts or a red sail putting out from the harbour broke the monotony of the tawny sand-hills, or the deep blue of sea and sky.

Two years earlier this sea-passage was an adventure of which every ill but tedium could be predicted, for until the spring of 1655 there was scarcely a village on that Barbary coast that was not the nest of slave-dealers, nor a ship on its waters that did not conceal a battery of pirate guns. But now, thanks to Admiral Blake, the Mediterranean was cleared of corsairs and of the more civilized Italian sea-thieves, and not even for the prize of a boat-load of unresisting Quakers would they dare defy the memory of the nine Turkish ships which he had burnt in Tunis Bay. The long voyage passed without incident, and towards the end of July, 1657, the six Friends landed peacefully at Leghorn.

Here, for nearly a month, they went in and out amongst the mixed population of English Protestants, Jews, and Roman Catholics, in the heat of the Italian summer, meeting with little sympathy and much opposition. They found a friend, however, in the English Agent, and a leading French merchant offered them help in the translation of the books which they had brought with them, besides giving them his services as interpreter—an invaluable aid to foreign missionaries, who, with the exception of their leader, Perrot, who could speak Italian, seem to have known no foreign language.*

On the eve of setting sail again for Turkey they were threatened with disaster. Perrot was summoned before the Inquisition, which was responsible at that period for the imprisonment of many of his fellow-Quakers throughout Europe. For this time, however, after a close examination, he was allowed to go free, and on August 20

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio xvii. 76.

took ship for Zante with his whole party. Here they separated, Luffe, with the three women, sailing direct to Smyrna, where they separated, waited for Perrot and Buckley, who joined them by way of Corinth and Athens at the end of the year.*

It seemed inevitable that with every new effort disappointment should meet them, who had no equipment for their task beyond faith and enthusiasm. Yet the mysticism which blinded them to their incapacity threw a halo around their failure. Luffe's vague summary of their visit to Smyrna carries no hint of discouragement, though it was written at a stage in their fortunes when his "brethren J.P. and J.B. were . . . detained in Agrippa in Negroponto by a Bashaw for not paying a custome," and he could "at present finde no sure way to releve them."

"The sound (of my) comming," he continues exultingly, "is gone through this towne among Turkes and Jewes and all. I am their (wo)nder and gazing stocke, but the Lord is a strong tower."

In the midst of his satisfaction, however, he adds the significant warning:

"Let none come hither but such as are throughly perswaded of their duty in obedience, so in God's strength, to come not elce."

The same letter, which was addressed to Gerard Roberts, one of the Treasurers of the Mission Fund, gives an insight into its methods of supporting its messengers, who, like a secular army, were dependent upon the supplies at their base. For the period covered by this expedition the Accounts contain items under the head of "Turkey," to the amount of £177 5s. 7d., a sum easily accounted for in the light of Luffe's demands.

* This part of the journey is involved in considerable confusion in the contemporary letters and histories. A clear account will be found on pp. 420-426 of "The Beginnings of Quakerism," by William Braithwaite, to whom also I am indebted for direction in the further research necessary for this chapter.

"Friend," he writes, "it will be needfull after sight hereof to take care to supply us. Our store is spent and here will be no supply for our further passage, as movings may require, untill bills come from London for necessaries. Whiles wee are here, will not any be wanting, a small matter will serve—things are very cheape; but as wee go further, here should be a little banke left, that upon occasion moneyes may be taken up by letters at Jerusalem, Cyprus, Alexandria, or Scanderoon or other parts. There is no carrying a quantity about us, therefore thinke of a considerable summe of 50 or 60 lb. stg. at least. It will serve the longer, and lesse trouble for the future. Let it be payd in London to some Turkey Merchant, and his bills inclosed in thy letter."*

Meanwhile the English Consul, whom Luffe reported to be kindly disposed to them, watched their proceedings with uneasiness, fearing every day to learn that the violence of the Moslems had been provoked by the ignorance or the religious enthusiasm of the visitors, "who knew not how to forbear nor to serve the times." He tried in vain to persuade them to return to England, and at last—as one account has it, by a ruse—he embarked them upon a ship bound for Venice.

On reaching Marseilles, Perrot wrote an all too vivid account of this voyage, leaving us in doubt as to how much of the storm which he describes was due to wind and weather, and how much to mental disturbance. In his breathless sentences we feel for a moment the spiritual atmosphere which enveloped the travellers, and watch the working of a mind to which the unseen world was more real and pervasive than the actual:

"In the ship sailing to Venice in the gulfes of Venice the Lord rained down snares of fire from Heaven and uttered his voice with thunders without and thunders within with stormes and fire without and within which wounded and slew and in this wise . . . it came to pass after that, the Lord raised his wind to put us into Zant Island where I left Mary Ffisher and B. B. (the third woman seems to have returned to England by another route), to pass into

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio xvii. 74.

Moreah again into Turkey which is in sight of that Island to go towards Adrianople where we hear ye Turkes Emperour lyes with his army being as is supposed six days journey from ye place where they may land as the lord makes way for their passage—blessed be the lord I left them both in a meet estate to proceed, J. B. to return as he was moved to Constantinople.”*

If the two women landed together on the coast of Morea, it seems certain that Beatrice Beckly left her companion to perform the rest of the journey alone. Probably she chose the safer part of travelling to Constantinople under Buckley’s escort, and waited there with him, in the faint hope that Mary would be able to join them when her mission was accomplished.

Perrot’s estimate of six days was a sanguine one. Mary Fisher had set out to walk five or six hundred miles. Her way lay across the Morea, through Greece and Macedonia, and over the mountains of Thrace. She had no knowledge of her route, and no means of inquiring it. Two or three lines of description from her own pen of this almost incredible journey would more than reconcile the worldly-minded student to the loss of her paper—“Given forth concerning putting off ye hat”—or even the characteristic little address—“From Mary ffisher, who desires the good of all People.”

Some light is thrown upon the state of the country through which she travelled by a contemporary “History of Turkey,”† written by Paul Rycaut, the English official who, in his position as Secretary to the Earl of Winchelsea, signed the warrant quoted above, which “put a stop” to two missionary Quakers. He subsequently succeeded to the post of Consul at Smyrna, and his historical researches earned him a Fellowship in the newly-founded Royal Society.

Mary was probably landed at a place called the Black

* Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio xvii. 76.

† “History of the Turkish Empire from the year 1623 to the year 1677,” by Paul Rycaut, Esq., late Consul of Smyrna. London, 1680.

Mountain, where, according to Rycaut, it was the custom for English ships to call on their way to Smyrna, because of the facilities it afforded for water and firing. Here, amongst forests of great trees, she said farewell to her companions, and began her lonely journey.

At the time of her visit the long struggle with Venice for the possession of Crete was still draining Turkey of its funds and its armies, and in 1656 civil war had also broken out between Pasha and Vizier. The state of the peasantry was one of pitiable and hopeless subjection. So great was the terror that the nobles had spread around them, and so cruel the hardships entailed upon the villagers by their system of free quartering, that the mere sight of a stranger, as Rycaut relates from his own experience, was enough to send them fleeing from their homes into the woods and mountains. It was only after a couple of these fugitives had been caught, and brought under the countryman's oath of fidelity (an oath which was never broken) that food or lodging could be obtained. Even town-dwellers were not exempt from this plague of fear. On one of his official journeys Rycaut encountered a Kadi, or Mayor, who was so terrified at the arrival of guests that neither he nor his servant had strength to open the gates, or read the letter of introduction which was sent in to him. Not until he had taken his morning dose of opium did he pluck up courage to answer the summons. Then, what with the effects of the drug and the relief of finding that he had no cause for alarm, his welcome became so fervid that the Englishman was thankful to make his escape, for, says he, "he seemed to me like a Bedlam."

One gathers from Rycaut's experiences that the farther a traveller passed from civilization, the more humane would be his reception. It was in the plains, far from the restraints of town life or the oppressions of the Government, that he tasted the primitive Eastern hospitality, and enjoyed what he calls "a passage of better civility and entertainment." The account of this

writer's welcome by the chief of a tribe of wandering shepherds reads like a page from the Book of Genesis. Late one evening he found himself in the midst of their encampment, a little city of tents made of hurdles and hair-cloth, which could be pitched at will where water and pasturage were most inviting. The Aga received him with the utmost courtesy, leading him beneath the shade of some trees, where rich carpets and cushions were spread for him to rest on. Here he was refreshed with bread and eggs, while inside the tents the housewives were preparing a great supper for him and his company. When in the early morning he rose to be gone, he was not allowed to depart empty-handed, but a fat kid was presented to him, killed and roasted for his future needs. In all his conversation with the chief, he found him very kind, and very inquisitive about his position and business. When in the end Rycaut would have paid for his entertainment, the "generous Shepherd" refused him, saying

"that his acceptance was a sufficient payment, for that all men were obliged to be civil and hospitable to men who travelled the world like him for publick service: and withal desired him to speak well, wheresoever he came, of such poor men who led their lives in the fields, who were instructed in these principles, viz., to hurt none, and to be humane and helpful to all mankind."

Making due allowance for the fact that she was a woman and solitary, these scenes may fairly be taken as typical of those which Mary Fisher passed through on her way to Adrianople. Although her unexpected arrival could scarcely have caused a panic in the breast of the most timorous Kadi, yet, like Rycaut, she was "travelling the world for publick service." She described herself as the bearer of a "message to the King from the Most High God," and there can have been no alternative for the puzzled peasants between accepting these credentials or regarding her as a madwoman, whose person, in that primitive community, would be equally sacred.

In the autumn of 1657 the Sultan, acting on a sudden resolve, had removed his Court from Constantinople, a capital which he hated and feared for the disloyalty of its inhabitants and the frequent mutinies of the garrison. While the missionary party which had left England for his conversion still lingered at Smyrna, he was making his entry into Adrianople in peculiar state, at the head of an army of 20,000 men, in the hope that he might overawe Ballarino, the unhappy Venetian Ambassador, whom he was keeping a prisoner in the town. According to his custom, he took up his residence in a pavilion outside the walls, and around it, circle beyond circle, the encampment extended, gleaming in the plain under the southern sunshine, along the banks of the River Maritza. Rycaut's description, written a couple of years later, shows the effect of its magnificence upon a mind inured to the display of Courts :

“The tents were raised on a small hill—and about two thousand in number ranged at that time without order, only the Grand Signior's seemed to be in the midst, and to over-top all the rest, well worthy observation, costing (as was reported) one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, richly embroidered in the inside with gold. Within the walls of this tent (as I may so call them) were all sorts of offices belonging to the Seraglio, all Retirements and Apartments for the pages, Chioskes or Summer-houses for pleasure : and though I could not get admittance to view the innermost Rooms and Chambers, yet by the outward and more common places of resort I could make a guess at the richness of the rest, being sumptuous beyond comparison of any in use amongst the Christian Princes. On the right hand hereof was pitched the Grand Vizier's Tent, exceeding rich and lofty : and had I not seen that of the Sultan's before it, I should have judged it the best that my eyes had seen. The ostentation and magnificence of this Empire being evidenced in nothing more than in the richness of their Pavilions, sumptuous beyond the fixed Palaces of Princes, erected with Marble and Mortar.”*

* Rycaut's "History : Reign of Sultan Mahomet," vol. iv., p. 120.

Here, after weeks of lonely travel, Mary Fisher came to her journey's end. Yet here, in sight of the goal, it seemed that her errand was to be frustrated. There was no citizen of Adrianople bold enough to present a strange woman to the Emperor, whose Court executioner stood ever at his right hand, ready to avenge the smallest slip in etiquette. At last, however, she found means of introduction to the Grand Vizier.

This was the famous Küprülü the elder, head of the Albanian family, and chieftain of the little fortress of Küprülü, which still stands unchanged among the Macedonian hills. He and his son Achmet, who succeeded him (a reversion itself unexampled in Turkish administration), gave the lie for all time to the accepted theory of Albanian incapacity for government. Two years before this date he had been hastily summoned by the Sultan, in a moment of civil and military crisis, and raised from the Pashalic of Damascus to the supreme post in the Empire. His elevation at once gave new life to the army, which had been discouraged by successive losses in the Venetian War, and torn by intestine struggles, and, despite the fact that he was now over eighty years of age, he was about to start for the front and put himself at the head of the troops. Mary's visit to the camp must have taken place before June 14, the day on which he left Adrianople for Transylvania. Rycaut describes this Grand Vizier as

"a person decrepit and infirm in body by reason of his great age, but of a sober and subtle judgment, by nature cruel, and by years froward. The old Fox," he goes on to say, "had so ingratiated himself with his master, for, to speak truly, he had been the only instrument that had preserved him and his Empire from falling into as many Divisions as there are Pashalicks or Governments, that the Grand Signor gave credit to him as an infallible oracle."

There is no record of Mary Fisher's interview with this all-powerful Minister, but its result is not in doubt. The

Grand Vizier, whose first and chief word to the young King had been "never to give Ear to the counsels and advices of Women," so far forgot his own precepts as to recommend him to grant the Englishwoman an audience, which was appointed for the following day.

Mary's judgment had not been at fault when she singled out the "Great Turk" as the one man in Europe who was most in need of her message. Mahomet the Fourth was the son of Sultan Ibrahim, a half-witted King, whose base and senseless excesses had brought him at last to prison and the bowstring. The son bore from infancy the mark of an attempt which his father had made upon his life in a fit of rage with the ladies of his harem. At the time of Mary's visit he was only sixteen years of age, and was glad to leave the whole business of government to his Grand Vizier, in whose hands it had largely resolved itself into a "game of blood." During the five years of Küprülü's ministry 36,000 persons were proscribed in their various countries, and privately strangled in Constantinople, till no man of importance was left alive in the Empire who was not entirely subject to him.

"The Grand Signior," as Rycaut quaintly says, "applauded the diligence and circumspection of his Minister, and being young and active, addicted himself wholly to the delight of Hunting, and to follow the chace of fearful and flying Beasts."*

He is described by one, who must surely have been a prejudiced witness, as

"a monster of a man, a deformed sight both in body and mind, as if one strove with the other how to offend: stupid, loggerheaded, cruel, fierce as to his aspect."†

On state occasions, among which it is evident that he reckoned this Quaker audience, he delighted to deck his unpleasing person in a vest of cloth of gold, lined with

* Rycaut's "History: Reign of Sultan Mahomet," vol. iv., p. 68.

† Croese's "History," pp. 270-276.

sable of the richest contrasting blackness. Around him were ranged the servants of the Seraglio—the highest rank of lacqueys standing next the royal person, the “Paicks” in their embroidered coats and caps of beaten gold, and the “Solacks,” adorned with feathers, and armed with bow and arrows. Behind them were grouped great numbers of eunuchs and the Court pages carrying lances. These wore the peculiar coiffure permitted only to those of the royal chamber, and above their tresses hung long red caps embroidered with gold.*

Mary Fisher was ushered into this brilliant scene with all the honours usually accorded to an Ambassador: the Sultan’s dragomans accompanied her, and stood waiting to interpret at the interview. She was at this time about thirty-five years of age—“a maid,” we are told, “whose intellectual faculties were greatly adorned by the gravity of her deportment.” She had had a day in which to refresh herself and to arrange her dress after the toils of the long journey; her speech to the King caused her little anxiety, knowing as she did that “it would be given her in that hour, what she should speak.” If, as Charles Lamb maintained, “every Quakeress is a lily,” Mary Fisher must have stood in her simple grey frock, amidst that riot of gold and scarlet, like a lily in a garden of tulips, her quiet face shining in that cruel and lustful place with the joy of a task accomplished and the sense of the presence of God.

The Sultan received her kindly, and treated her throughout the interview with a deference to which she had been little accustomed in her own country. Yet it seemed at first as though fidelity to her Quaker principle was to hinder the delivery of her message. Waiting for that inward light without whose guidance no word must be spoken, she stood in silence, or replied in monosyllables to the Sultan’s encouraging speeches. He mistook the cause of her hesitation, and offered to dismiss

* Rycaut’s “History: Reign of Sultan Mahomet,” vol. iv., p. 120.

some of his suite, that the presence of so large an audience might not distress her. But she answered "No." What follows is best told in the words of William Sewel, the Quaker historian. Written while the story was still fresh in men's minds, his account is so simple and vivid that one is glad to think it may have been taken directly from the lips of Mary herself.

"He then bade her speak the word of the Lord to them, and not to fear, for they had good hearts and could hear it. He also charged her to speak the word she had to say from the Lord, neither more nor less, for they were willing to hear it, be it what it would. Then she spoke what was upon her mind. The Turks hearkened to her with much attention, and gravity, till she had done: and then the Sultan, asking her whether she had anything more to say, she asked him whether he understood what she said? And he answered, Yes, every word, and further said, that what she had spoken was truth. Then he desired her to stay in that country, saying that they could not but respect such an one, as should take so much pains to come to them so far as from England, with a message from the Lord God. He also proffered her a guard to bring her into Constantinople, whither she intended. But she, not accepting this offer, he told her it was dangerous travelling, especially for such an one as she; and wondered that she had passed so safe so far as she had: saying also that it was in respect to her, and kindness that he proffered it, and that he would not for anything that she should come to the least hurt in his dominions. She having no more to say, the Turks asked her what she thought of their prophet Mahomet?"

In her answer to this dangerous question, Mary showed a tactfulness very unusual amongst her fellow-missionaries, and justified the repute of her "great endowments not only of mind and wit, but also great dexterity and experience." She

"answered warily, that she knew him not, but Christ the true Prophet, the Son of God, who was the Light of the World, and enlightened every man coming into the World, him she knew. And concerning Mahomet she

said, that they might judge of him to be true or false according to the words and prophecies he spoke: saying further, 'If the word that a prophet speaketh come to pass, then shall ye know that the Lord hath sent that prophet; but if it come not to pass, then shall ye know that the Lord never sent him.' The Turks confessed this to be true: and Mary having performed her message, departed from the camp to Constantinople without a guard, whither she came without the least hurt or scoff." *

Here Thurloe's State Papers take up the tale. In the summer of 1658, Sir Thomas Bendish, the English Ambassador at Constantinople, found himself between two fires. Bound by his position to watch over the interests of English traders, whose business since the days of Elizabeth had been steadily increasing in importance, it had taxed all his ingenuity to secure them proper payment for their goods. But now the Venetians had attacked the "*Lewis frigatt*" on her way to the Porte, and so terrified the peaceful merchant-men that they refused to attempt the return voyage until Bendish had addressed a strongly worded remonstrance to the offending General. Writing to the Protector on July 24, from Pera di Constantinople, the sorely-tried Ambassador continues:

"Nor are all our troubles from without us: some are, as I may say, from amongst us, and from within us, occasioned by a generation of people called Quakers, three whereof not long since arrived here from Zant by way of the Morea, whom I suffered with tenderness so long as their comportment was offencelesse, but when, at length, becoming scandalous to our nation and religion, (which upon this occasion was censured and scoffed at by Papist, Jew, and others of a strange faith) and insufferable also by reason of their disturbances of our divine exercises and severall notorious contempts of me and my authority, I friendly warned them to returne, which the two women did quietly, but John Buckly refuseing, I was constrained

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 472-474.

to shipe him hence upon the *Lewis*. I have presumed to derive so much of the trouble which this people have put me to, upon your highness, as to give you an account thereof.”*

“And so,” in Sewel’s concise statement, “she returned safe to England.” On January 13, 1658-59, Mary Fisher was writing from London to three Quaker preachers, one being Thomas Aldam, her old companion in York Castle, “with their dear wives”—

“My dear love salutes you all in one, you have been often in my remembrance since I departed from you, and being now returned into England and many tryalls such as I was never tryed with before, yet have I borne my testimony for ye Lord before ye King unto whom I was sent, and he was very noble unto me, and so were all yt were about him: he and all that were about him received ye words of truth without contradiction. They do dread ye name of God, many of them, and eyes his Messengers. There is a royall seed amongst them which in time God will raise. They are more near truth then many Nations, there is a love begot in me towards them which is endlesse, but this is my hope concerning them, yt he who hath raised me to love them more then many others will also raise his seed in them unto which my love is. Nevertheless, though they be called Turkes, ye seed of them is near unto God, and their kindnesse hath in some measure been shewne towards his servants. After ye word of ye Lord was declared to them, they would willingly to have me to stay in ye country, and when they could not prevaile with me, they proffered me a man and a horse to go five days journey that was to Constantinople, but I refused and came safe from them. The English are more bad, most of them, yet there hath a good word gone thorow them, and some have received it, but they are few: so I rest with my dear love to you all.—Your dear sister, Mary ffisher.”†

With this confidence she summed up the spiritual results of her mission—a confidence without which it could never have been undertaken and never carried

* Thurloe’s State Papers, vii. 287.

† Barclay MSS., i. 164.

through. But if one asks what were the visible results of the enterprise, the question is hard to answer. For Luffe and Perrot the journey ended in long and weary imprisonment under the Inquisition at Rome, followed by a shameful death by hanging for Luffe, and for Perrot by liberty delayed too long to save his intellect or his reputation. The Grand Turk was unconverted either from his politics or his hatred of the Christian. Three years later, under Küprülü the younger, his armies were advancing into the heart of Austria, and Roger l'Estrange in the *News-Book*, was appealing for men,

“that in this Mortal Extremity, not only of the Empire, but of Christendom, must put a Stop to the Barbarous Rage of these Blood-Thirsty Turks.”

His “Query” was answered very appropriately by William Bayly, now Mary Fisher’s husband, from his prison at Hartford, with the cold comfort that this threatened destruction was a punishment for the persecution of the Quakers, and a just judgment of God upon “you false Christians.”*

Mary Fisher, as she had been fortunate in her mission, was alone happy in its consequences. It appears that one effect of her return to England was the offer of marriage, which she accepted, from William Bayly, a master-mariner, and a revered preacher amongst the Quakers. He was a man who for conscience’ sake had put away ambition, together with a brilliant prospect of rising in his profession (“the Serpent having in his youth led out his mind wholly to delight in the Art of Arithmetick”), and he had endured long and repeated imprisonments for his protests against the wickedness of the ports which he frequented. He discerned a kindred spirit in this dauntless traveller, “and thought her worthy to make him a (second) wife.”

* “Collection of the Several Wrightings of William Bayly.” London, 1676. (An Answer to a Query, Published in the *News-Book*, concerning Help against the Turk.)

It is evident, also, that Mary's mission brought her honour and fame amongst her fellow-Quakers—an honour which she never looked for, and of which she probably remained unconscious—a fame which still singled her out in 1697, when an aged widow in Charlestown, as “one whose name you have heard of, Mary Fisher, she that spake to the Great Turk.”

CHAPTER VII

HUSBAND AND WIFE

WHEN Fox, at the age of twenty, was urged by his relatives to try the cure of matrimony for his mental restlessness, "he prudently told them," says Sewel, "he was but a lad, and must get wisdom."* In later years, by the nature of his calling, rather than by any deliberate act of asceticism, he was cut off like his Master from the joys of home and the love of wife and child. Yet, living as he did in unity with the Creation, he could have little sympathy with the abstract doctrine of celibacy. His marriage, at the age of forty-five, was undertaken rather as a protest against the growing prevalence of the ascetic ideal than from any more personal reason.†

Very early in his ministry it became necessary for him to formulate his ideas upon marriage, and the papers which he "gave forth" on this head are more numerous than on any other. Dealing mainly with the rules to be observed in connection with the Quaker ceremony, they contain here and there a valuable definition of "right marriage." The doctrine, then universally accepted, of the inequality of the sexes, is conspicuously absent from these definitions, and the obedience due from the wife to the husband is tacitly, if not categorically, denied.

"As men and women," he wrote in 1674, "were helpmeets before the Fall in the Image of God's Righteousness and holiness, so they are helpmeets again in the Restoration, in the Image of holiness and righteousness by Christ Jesus."

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 15.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 154.

"Whom God joineth together," he says of an "honourable marriage," "are with ye Light which is eternall, in ye Unity in ye Covenant of Life, of Light, and of Peace, and this Marriage is honourable."*

This was a hard doctrine, and much disputed by the "ancient Puritans." Their dissatisfaction found vent in 1673 in a direct question put to Fox by a certain Nathaniel Coleman, a leader of the Separatists, and one of the foremost opposers of the establishment of the Women's Meeting.

"This Coleman," so Fox records the incident, "and others in there opposition askt mee whether it was not ye Commande of God yt a man must rule over his wiffe, and hee woulde rule over his wiffe."

The reply given by Fox is confused by repetition and diffuseness, but the sense is still plainly to be gathered.

"Thy ruleinge over thy wiffe and eldershippe is in ye fall, for thou art in ye transgression, and not an elder in ye image of God, and righteousnesse and holynesse before transgression and ye fall was: nor in ye restoration where they are helpes meete, in ye righteousnesse and image of God, and in ye dominion over all yt God "made."†

Fox's regulations for the performance of the marriage ceremony, being founded also upon his reading of the Scriptures, were scarcely less revolutionary than his definition of marriage itself. Adam's wedding of Eve in Paradise was to be the model for all future ceremonies, differing from them in one particular only, its unavoidable lack of witnesses. Adam's "forme of wordes," as Fox quaintly described the speech of our first father when Eve was brought to him, was recommended to the study of every enlightened bridegroom, though it "is nothing to ym yt are workers of darknesse."‡

* Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 38.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 262.

‡ Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 49.

It was fortunate that the law existing at the time did not enforce a ceremony in church, though an Act passed in 1653 had rendered obligatory the presence of a justice of the peace.* Marriage in church or by a priest was, of course, impossible to the loyal Quaker.

“It is nott ye Bishops nor ye preists work to marry people, as you may read from ye begining of Genesis to ye end of ye Revelattions—you never see yt either preist or bishop married any throughout all ye Scriptures: but yt is God’s work, and an ordinance of God: whom God joynes togeather lett noe man putt asunder.”†

On this point no concession could be made.

Fox’s innovations, however, like the work of all practical reformers, sprang from the union of idealism with common sense. His regulations, framed in the same year of 1653, showed a willingness to comply as far as possible with legal requirements, and left his followers free, if they wished, to give notice of their marriage to the magistrate, or at the market-cross—a not unusual place for such announcements. In addition to this optional publication, Fox provided for the observance of certain formalities before marriage, which were intended to safeguard the simple Quaker ceremony from abuse.

In spite of these precautions, many irregularities crept in during the next twenty years, and a spirit of disloyalty, fostered by Perrot, “cried out against all forms,” and threatened to bring anarchy into the Men’s and Women’s Meetings. Writing in 1675, Fox complained that it had become a common thing for a couple to stand up and take one another at the end of an ordinary meeting, ignoring his requirement that notice should first be given, and consent obtained from Friends and near relatives. Worse than this,

“the loose ones of the world would stand up and take one

* Braithwaite, p. 145.

† Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 49.

another in Friends' Meetings, Friends not knowing who they were, nor whence they came, of purpose to save their money which the priest would ask for marrying them"!

In many places, also, no registers were kept, and no marriage certificates given.*

These abuses Fox set himself rigorously to remove. In numerous letters on this subject he laid down rules for the publication of all intended marriages before the Women's and then before the Men's Meetings, and enjoined the careful scrutiny of the proposal for lawful impediment. An entry in a Minute Book of the year 1715 shows this provision at work :

"This day Tho. Goad and Eliz. Crosfield appeared before, Desiring this Meeting's approbation. Made proposal to us of their Intentions of marriage each with other, Desiring the Meeting's approbation thereof, And understand each of them had the consent of parents of each, and all declared them clear from all others in ye like concern."†

Stranger Friends from "another Nation, or Island, or Plantation" were to bring with them a certificate from the Men's Meeting of their native place to the Men's Meeting before which they wished to be married: "So," Fox adds, with a flash of that descriptive humour which lights up his dullest pages, "this will stopp all bad and rawe spirits from raveing up and down."‡ Caton anticipated this rule in 1662 in the prelude to his wedding in Amsterdam. Not content, after five years of almost continuous residence in Holland, with the consent of the Friends in that country, he obtained a second certificate from the Swarthmoor Meeting, which he had left seven years before.§

In this contract, as in all others, Fox insisted upon the obligation of perfect sincerity. "No man or woman to speak anything but that which they do uprightly and

* Bristol MSS., v. 8.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 37.

† Dix MSS., Z, 6.

§ *Ibid.*, i. 331.

faithfully intend to perform in all things." That this performance might be made the easier to them, he added the injunction :

"If a man or woman be engaged or espoused, or in Covenant of Marriage, then not for any man or woman to draw the man from the woman, nor to draw the woman from the man : and soe to gett the woman to himself or the woman get the man to herself. This is for Judgment and Condemnation, for it is a wicked thing."*

His care for the preliminaries of marriage is further shown in the special rules framed by him for the remarriage of widows—"that they should make provision for their first husband's children before they married again"—a rule which was scrupulously adhered to in his own marriage to Margaret Fell.

"And I was moved," he writes in his Journal, "to aske ye children whether they was all satisfyed, and whether Margaret had aunswered them accordinge to her husbands will to her children shee beinge a widdowe, and if her husband had left any thinge to her for ye assistans of her children which if shee marryed they might suffer losse therein whether shee had aunswered ym in leiu of yt and all other thinges. And ye children made aunswer and said : shee had doubled it, and woulde not have mee to speake of those thinges."†

All initial stages having been successfully passed, delegates were to be appointed from the Monthly Meeting, "to see to the accomplishing the said Marriages in good order to the honour of the truth." They acted, no doubt, upon a hint given by Fox : "Have a care of driving any to the Priests by long putting off marriages."

This was, indeed, a pitfall against which repeated warnings were uttered, and it drew upon those who fell into it a reprobation which seems out of all proportion to the offence.

"All such pretended freind or freinds yt has gon to ye Preists of Baale to marry them, or have beene drawn by

* Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 37.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 153.

their relations and freinds to save their estates for their heires as they pretend—such have gone from ye light of Christ in them.”*

Letters written from London in 1671 throb with indignation over the “publick prophain practice” of a certain John Pennyman, “in publishing his having M. Boarman to his wife.” This Pennyman seems to have been still a nominal Friend, though he had fallen away from his loyalty to Fox, and written many pamphlets against the Quakers.† Details are wanting of the publication of his wedding, but there is little doubt that he had been guilty of having his banns read in church. The scandalized Ellis Hookes (the Recording Clerk) sent a report of the wedding itself to Margaret Fell on October 21 :

“Next third day heere is like to be a madd frolick acted by our Apostatized Apostle John Penniman, who then intends to wedd Mary Boreman. They would have had ye Meeting House at Grasious (Gracechurch) Street, (but it was denyed ym) to have donne the action in. Soe he has gott the Greatest Hall about London belonging to any Company, viz. Marchant Taylors Hall, and has invited all or most of ye Aldermen of the citty as I heare : and the whole sinagogue of ye Jewes to be there and all his old associates both freinds and others yt he had any interest in, and all sorts of Ranters . . . I heare he has provided 27 venison pastyes and severall pipes of wine : and now at last he will shew to all the world what a prophain Quaker he is.”‡

Rebecca Travers, one of the members of the Women’s Meeting, adds a final touch to the lurid picture :

“Jno. Peningman . . . has given occasion to ye world by his public profane practise In publishing his having M. Boarman to his wife of which there is by Ballott singers and such like, verses made and sold in ye street called ye Quakers Wedding. I write not ye manner knowing it has been published In Court City

* Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 49.

† Fox’s Journal, note in vol. ii., p. 431.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 57.

and Countrys as it is like it may be with you afore this.”*

While Friends had Fox's permission to safeguard their marriages by giving notice to the magistrate, the more rigid were “not free” to acknowledge the right of legal supervision, and contented themselves with the witness and approbation of the Quaker Meeting. A curious fragment of dialogue, docketed “Trial of a marriage, 1654,” is found among the Swarthmoor MSS., and is probably typical of many such incidents. The prisoner, Cuthbert Hunter, had defended his position “according to that example he found among the saints”; but the magistrate, after some cross-examination, found that he “had broke the laws of man and the law of God, for which he was to be punished.”

“I desired him,” says Cuthbert Hunter, “to prove before that people, wherein but he answered—take him away and let him find either sureties, or go to prison. I said I would find none, for I knew no Law I had broken, but that which is contrary to the Law of God, and then they took me away.”†

How long the offender lay in prison is not recorded. It was not until seven years later that the validity of the Friends' form of marriage was legally established by a test case at Nottingham. A certain Quaker had died, leaving an estate in copyhold lands. When a posthumous son was born to him, one of the near relatives disputed the marriage and the right of the infant to succeed to his father's estates. The case was brought into court, and when counsel had pleaded on both sides, the judge, whose name was Archer, opened the case to the jury. Using the very words and argument of Fox, he told them “that there was a marriage in Paradise, when Adam took Eve, and Eve took Adam; and that it was the consent of the parties that made a marriage.” The jury, being thus

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 395.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 127.

instructed, gave their verdict for the child, and declared it legitimate.*

For one hundred and eighty years this ruling went unchallenged, and the validity of Quaker marriages was acknowledged, although they were not celebrated in strict conformity with the law. The acknowledgment did not, however, prevent the occasional prosecution of Quakers on this ground by their inveterate enemies, the priests. In 1678 Besse reports the arraignment of two men in the Bishop's Court at Bristol, "because they had been married otherwise than according to the Liturgy of the Church of England," and their committal to prison, "on writs *de excommunicato capiendo*.† From 1753-1837 the marriages of the Friends and of the Jews were the only weddings permitted in England outside the usages of the Established Church.‡ It was not until 1844, however, that the absolute necessity of a celebration in the Church of England was legally laid down by a decision in the House of Lords in the case of the Queen *v.* Millis. The validity of Quaker marriages having been previously established by the *nisi prius* case at Nottingham, an Act was passed after the decision of 1844, validating these marriages, *ex post facto*.§

It would have been well if the settlement of the ceremony of marriage had laid the question of matrimony at rest, but this initial stumbling-block was only the beginning of the trials which beset the married Quaker. It was easy for Fox to make a rule against "marrying with the World"—a rule which was faithfully adhered to until late in the nineteenth century—but this could not cover the case of the mature converts of his own day who were already yoked with unbelievers. The early pages of his Journal contains many such incidents as that of the unforgettable riot on Walney Island in 1652 :

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 536.

† Besse, vol. i., p. 53.

‡ "Society of Friends : Its Faith and Practice," by J. S. Rowntree, p. 30. London, 1908.

§ Braithwaite, p. 145.

“They all layde att mee againe” (his assailants were forty to one), “and knockt mee downe, and mased mee : and when I was doune and came to my selfe I lookt uppe and I saw Ja: Lancasters wiffe throweing stones att my face and Ja: Lancaster her husbände was lyinge atoppe of mee to save ye blowes and ye stones off mee.”*

One may take, on the other hand, the experience of Sarah Browne of Barrow, whose husband, a Baptist, shut up their house at the beginning of the persecution, and carried her away to a place called Barnett Hills in Leicestershire, which was outside the jurisdiction of the Five Mile Act. Fox reports the subsequent repentance of this “Flyinge Baptist”—

“ye man was soe plagued and Judged in himselfe for flyinge and draweing his wiffe Into yt private place for feare shee shoulde bee cast Into prison.”†

Some concession was made by the law in the case of the Quaker wife of a conforming husband. When the Act of Banishment was passed in 1664, condemning men and women Quakers alike to transportation beyond seas, the wife of a non-Quaker was exempted from this extreme penalty, escaping, in the strange legal phrase, as a “feme covert,” with one year’s imprisonment, or a fine not exceeding £40, to be paid by her husband.‡ When the orthodox partner happened to be the wife, the hardships entailed upon her by her husband’s imprisonment or transportation must have been still greater and more numerous, but it is not recorded that any concession was contemplated on her behalf. Fox relates a curious incident which occurred at Lancaster during the whole-sale imprisonments of 1663 :

“And severall of ye wiffes of severall freinds came and told ym (the Justices) if they did committ there husbands to ye goale for nothings else but for the truth of

* Fox’s Journal, vol. i., p. 60.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 18.

‡ Sewel, vol. ii., p. 143.

Christ and good Conscience sake: they would come and bringe there children to ye Justices for ym to maine-taine ym."*

If the married life of ordinary Friends was thus disturbed by persecution and interrupted by imprisonment, the case of the travelling preacher and his wife was pitiable in the extreme. One knows not which had the harder lot—the husband who must leave his wife and little ones to the mercy of the informer and the legalized robbery of "the greedy hireling priest," or the wife, who, beside her own danger, bore the anxiety of her husband's almost inevitable imprisonment, and, as frequently happened, the humiliating necessity of applying in her poverty to Margaret Fell. Perhaps the most human cry in all these old chronicles comes from the wife of Miles Halhead, an early preacher in Westmorland.

"His going thus often from home," so Sewel puts it, was an exceeding great cross to his wife, who, in the first year of his change, not being of his persuasion, was very much troubled in her mind, and would often say from discontent: 'Would to God I had married a drunkard, then I might have found him at the alehouse: but now I cannot tell where to find my husband.'"

At the end of a year, however, as Sewel records, "it pleased the Lord to visit her"—an ominous phrase with the early Quakers, and sadly degraded from its old Biblical tenderness. Her little son, "her chiefest joy," fell sick and died, the unhappy mother realizing, by means of a vision, that she had brought the punishment upon herself through her opposition to her husband.

"From that time," she confessed, "I never durst oppose thee, my husband, any more in the work of the Lord, for fear that his judgments might also fall upon me and my children."†

On the other hand, the letters of Ann Audland, who herself became a preacher, known to the authorities as

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 43.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 132.

"that prating woman Audler," must have supported her husband through his travels and imprisonments with their loving encouragement and self-effacing bravery.

"Dear heart," she writes, "we are all well and do witness the words of the Lord to be true, for he cares for us, and his presence is with us, and he refreshes us daily, and as thou saidst to me, so I say to thee, take no care for us, but in the work of the Lord stand faithful. Dear heart, thy little one is well: neglect no opportunity to write to me."

In most cases, indeed, one can divine a peculiar bond between the suffering husband and wife, separated though they might be by leagues of sea or land, by prison bars, and by the message which drove them asunder. Katherine Evans, a prisoner in the Inquisition at Malta, threatened with the stake, and despairing almost of liberty, can write to John, her husband, a prisoner in the South Country:

"Most dear and faithful husband, Friend and Brother, begotten of my Eternal Father and of the Immortal seed of light, Life, and Blessedness: I have unity and fellowship with thee, day and night, to my great Refreshment and continual Comfort. Praises, Praises be given to our God for evermore, who hath joined us together in that which neither Sea nor Land can separate nor divide."*

The "Family of Love," who in 1688 described themselves to King James II. as "a sort of refined Quakers," † had anticipated much of Fox's teaching by more than a century. About the year 1530, their founder, Henry Niclaes, amongst other striking resemblances, provided for the admission of women into the ranks of his preachers. They carried with them, however, the badge of their inferiority, for while a man and his wife might both be priests, the woman could never rise above the lowest grade. Another order of priests was consecrated by Niclaes, who, in his mystical phrase, before taking to themselves a wife, "first got rid of the corruption of earthly marriage." Henceforth they were considered to

* Besse, vol. ii., p. 408.

† Evelyn's Diary, p. 462. Routledge.

be spiritually celibate, while actual marriage was in no way interfered with.*

Whatever may be understood by "the corruption of earthly marriage," the phrase is symptomatic of the distrust of matrimony which was a feature of the religious thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Particularly in time of persecution, when the drawbacks of the married state were so many and so obvious, it was natural that the advantages of celibacy, including its quality of holiness, should be ever present in men's minds. An apologetic, almost a penitent, attitude is plainly discernible in the letters written by Quakers of this period who "wished to change their condition." The distracting but almost inevitable preliminary of courtship accorded ill with their life of peril and wandering, though it was left to a national meeting of Irish Friends (always the strictest sect of the Quakers) to formulate the caution "that they should not treat with any on account of marriage, whilst travelling in the Lord's service."†

In this, as in all other difficulties, it was the custom to take Margaret Fell, or Fox himself, into consultation, "standing to thy advice in it," so an anxious correspondent writes to Fox, "as to a father."

One series of letters, sent to Margaret Fell in 1654, and endorsed from "an onest man whoe died in the trouth," contains an ingenuous account of a *mariage manqué*. Richard Weaver had heard on one of his journeys of the convincement of his friend's sister, herself a stranger to him, whereupon, so he explains in his quaint style, she "was veri nere mee, and at som time after that, shee being laid before mee somthing of her being my wife, which I could not entertane, being afraid of that thing."

His introduction to the lady followed some time afterwards, as she came with her brother out of a meeting.

* Barclay's "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," p. 31.

† Rutty's "History of the Quakers in Ireland," p. 418.

Hee told mee shee was his sister, and the thing coming into mee sudenly, I was as if I had beene struk downe, but qickly geting abov it, could not entertane it, so I passed from London."

The project, however, could not be so lightly dismissed, and for some weeks the battle between desire and duty—if the metaphor is not too forcible for his balanced calculation—raged backwards and forwards. The example of his fellow-Quakers could not be taken as encouragement,

"considering how som pritie frinds who were come to a groth before me, acording to what I did see then, suffered los in that thing."

His own motives were not above suspicion. "Sometimes I examined whether it might not bee an erthly end, being her mother cept a shop."

"Always," he confesses, with touching self-criticism, "I was afrade lest I should be betrayed and soe lose my unitie and enjoyment which was derer to mee then all the world could aford."

In spite of all these grave risks, he determined at last to put his fate to the touch, "the thing lieing before me veri heavie to speake to her of it." The initiative came from his horse, who had brought him, almost of its own accord, to the town to attend a meeting, and had halted at her door.

"Where," says he, "I light and went in, and siting down, the woman tould mee of the lat buriell of a frind, which brought mee to a stand that I should goe."

With this most lame and impotent conclusion the letter breaks off. Always watching for the guiding finger, Richard Weaver may have accepted the mention of death as a "sign" against his marriage. The lady's introduction of the topic at such a moment may have been set down to the score of imperfect sympathy, and thrown cold water upon a very dimly burning flame. It is clear, however, that "goe" he did.

His next report follows a month or two later :

"As for that which I formerly writ to thee of, it is as it were remooved or taken away, and according to what I know, it were well it were out of friends."*

A like story with a different ending is told in the letters written two years later to Margaret Fell from Richard Hunter. His proposed marriage has already been discussed between them, and while he confesses that his determination is unshaken, he writes in an apologetic strain :

"Though the thing be but by permision, as thou tould mee, which thing I do clearely see and know, and the thing, I see, is but permitted to some whose conditions are accordingly . . . (those, perhaps, who 'had got rid of the corruption of earthly marriage'?) . . . in sengleness of hart I speake it: it was not to obtayne or get A great Porsion of the earth that my love was drawne out to her : but it was and is to have felowshipe with yt mesure of God which in her is made manifest."†

The letter in which he rounds off his simple narrative is very unlike Weaver's thanksgiving for his escape, and carries a strangely conflicting moral :

"And now in ye presents of ye lord I speake. I have since my comeinge under this yoke found yt which was far beyond my expectation: for I did expect yt I should have had my Condition shut up for a time, but glory unto ye lord I have found it otherwise, and I think it is ye same with her."†

The exaltation of celibacy, in common with other strange doctrines both ancient and modern, attained its full growth in America, where it appears to have owed its introduction to English Friends. One of the most damaging charges brought against the Quakers in New England was that they refused to have children. There was, unfortunately, some ground for this accusation, and it requires no further proof than the treatment meted out by them to an English Quaker and his wife during their

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 91 ; iii. 97.

† *Ibid.*, i. 357, 358.

common imprisonment in Boston. The story is told by Joseph Nicholson in a letter written from the gaol to Margaret Fell on April 3, 1660. He and his wife Jane had been cast into prison by Governor Endicott on their arrival from England, and three Salem Friends were presently sent to share their captivity. It was a time of most imminent peril. Two Quakers had already been hanged by the magistrates, and two months later, Mary Dyer, already once reprieved, was to give up her life upon the gallows. Yet the stranger from England is driven to report of his fellow-sufferers:

“When the came to preson, the sayd the could not Joyn with us, because my wife was with childd. I judged them much in that thinge. . . . I doe belive it will hurt the truth.”

Nicholson himself, as he confesses, had been at one time attracted in England by this doctrine of asceticism, which, from his description, was in a fair way to split the Quaker Church in New England, and to achieve by internal schism and family discord what persecution and martyrdom had failed to accomplish. He recounts his further dealings with these extremists in a delightfully human passage:

“I had and have much peace in plaguing of them, as I ame moved of the lord. For that spirit did vex mee much after I came from london till I found it out, and many times did much over power mee . . . it was the sorest thing that ever befell mee in my life time befor I found it out . . . for often times it did much cowl my afection towards my wife and alsoe towards my children . . . as my wife knows right well.”*

There is a welcome sequel to this cruel experience in a letter written three months later from the refuge of Rhode Island:

“Our childd is well, and a wonder to many, and servisable in its place as to the truth. Its much rejoicing to

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 107.

many women my wifs comeing. . . . Jane's coming," he states in another paragraph, had "upset" the opinion that "the men run away from ther wifs and wifs from ther husbands, and that the quakers would have noe children, but that is now stoped. People see it is not soe as it was reported."*

The story of the short married life of Thomas and Elizabeth Holme is an epitome of all that was best and worst in the married life of the early Quakers. They were both natives of Kendal, and were convinced together in 1652, in common with the great body of Seekers under Camm and Audland, who joined themselves to Fox in that year. Holme had been a weaver, and Elizabeth was also of humble birth, but they both possessed that indefinable quality which could sway large audiences, "terribly shaking" the hardened conscience. The effect of Elizabeth's influence is suggested by a contemporary reporter: "Truely the most glorious power is most manifest in her." Holme had all the fervour of a primitive evangelist, and his excitable spirit drove him beyond the bounds of decorum even of his own unfastidious age. His spontaneous singing shocked his sober fellow-Quakers, and he was thrown into prison by the magistrates of Chester for having walked naked through the city "as a sign." He was one of the most open-hearted and copious of letter-writers, but Elizabeth, if she understood the art of writing, was content to confine her eloquence to public addresses. No letter of hers is found amongst the Swarthmoor Manuscripts.

Their missionary labours dated from their conviction, and they seem to have begun at once to work in company. Holme's first letter to Margaret Fell, from "the Palas" at Chester, dated "about 1653," mentions Elizabeth Leavens and Jane Waugh, one of Camm's serving-maids, as his fellow-prisoners. But Elizabeth's first recorded service was with "little" Elizabeth Fletcher,

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 108.

who was also a native of Kendal, and with whom she shared, in the spring of 1654, the cruel flogging and imprisonment in the city of Oxford.

The Quaker accounts offer a somewhat pathetic commentary to these missionary journeys. From this date of 1654 the names of Thomas Holme and Elizabeth Leavens are seldom absent from their columns. Before starting for the south, Elizabeth Fletcher was given a "Hatt" worth 2s. 4d., but Elizabeth Leavens must have received a complete outfit, her "clotheinge" costing the Fund £1. 3s.—a great sum in the seventeenth century. Thomas Holme was treated on an equally lavish scale. The same page contains the entry :

"For Tho: Holme for a p'e of britches and showes,
10s. 6d."

And a little later—

"To Thom: Holme at his goeing forth, 5s.
For Clothes and other necesaries for him, 13s."*

Towards this total amount Margaret Fell herself contributed "£1. 2s. od." "at severall times." These facts go far to acquit her of ungenerous treatment in her later dealings with the couple.

While his girl friends were suffering at the hands of the University authorities, Holme had become the centre of a remarkable revival in Cheshire and South Lancashire, where his excitable nature had awaked a corresponding condition in his hearers. On one occasion, when he was to be arrested as the author of mysterious, and therefore treasonable disturbances, the very officer sent to take him had fainted before he could accomplish his task.† Now, "the power," as he wrote, was around him in his cell, making him "deny his bed" and lie on the floor, where, like Paul and Barnabas, he amazed his fellow-prisoners by "sweet mellode" at midnight.‡

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 208, 215.

† *Ibid.*, i. 189.

‡ *Ibid.*, i. 190.

At this stage Elizabeth Leavens returned to Chester, Elizabeth Fletcher also passing through the city on her way to Ireland. It is delightful to read Holme's generous appreciation, written from prison, of the two women who were carrying on his work.

"They are such as the like of them I know not. By their ministry friends grows exceedingly and meetings are kept up gallantly, friends are kept fresh and green here aways."

After such enthusiasm, Holme's announcement of his marriage to Elizabeth Leavens cannot have been altogether unexpected:

"Upon the 16 day of the 8 month the same day wee weare set free from outward bonds, being in Chester at Edward Morgan's house, and shee with mee, and many more other friends, I was emedeatly comanded of the Lord to take hir to wife that day, having before sen it cleare in the light eternal, and had a veacion of it long befor, as likewise she had: Soe in obedience to the Comand of the Lord I took hir to wife contrary to my will befor divers frinds . . . and I would have thee send word to him who hath joned us together, G ff. for it will stand before him, and soe befor the eternal God."*

When Holme referred to Fox as the maker of their marriage, he was probably thinking of their convincement together under his ministry, while his claim of Fox's approval was intended to cover the unlawful precipitancy of the ceremony. His impatience, no less than the whole tenor of his after-life, gives the lie to Holme's pose as a martyr to duty in this matter, and it is hard to forgive his assumption of the unlovely convention of unwillingness when he married his brave friend, "the innocent and comely young maid" from his native town.

The first year of their life together is an idyll of mutual help and childlike happiness. Already in his cell at Chester Holme had felt "sweet mellode within him."

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 195.

Now with his young bride he went singing through their native county, both

“being much exercised by the power of the Lord in songs and himes and prayer that made mellodie and rejoyced the hart of some, but being not in wisdom of words alltogether made some scruple.”*

Singing was indeed an exercise discountenanced by the serious Quaker. Margaret Fell, in her “Touchstone . . . for the Priests,” allows of “singing for joy, when moved by the spirit,” but singing as practised in church she describes as “more like May-gaming than the worshipping of God.”

When the unconventional services of the young Holmes came to Fox’s ears, he noted with his customary broad-mindedness in the Journal :

“Ye life was raised thereby and refreshed in many in yt meetinge : but some did scruple, of Underbarrowe ; butt it Confounded ye enticeinge words of mans wisdom : Itt beinge ye preachinge of ye crosse.”†

The happy interlude soon came to an end, and the young husband and wife set their faces southward—he for Chester, and she for Oxford, the scene of her sufferings of the year before.

In the autumn of 1655 Elizabeth Holme, with a companion, Alice Birkett, another convert from Kendal, became the first missionary to South Wales, where her husband joined them in January. Musical and enthusiastic as they were both, Holme and his wife made a peculiar appeal to the Welsh nature, and before the end of April they were able to report ten or eleven centres where small meetings had been settled.

About this time, however, a shadow begins to darken over Holme’s joyous letters. Since September 1, 1655, he and his wife had been again indebted to the extent of nearly £2 to the Quaker Fund, and this at a time when

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 247.

† Fox’s Journal, vol. ii., p. 326.

"the generall Stock was disburst, and there was great Occasion, and the less anie hath given that travills in this nation the better."*

It was an inopportune moment for his announcement that he and Elizabeth were expecting a child, and Margaret Fell's attitude on receipt of this news was anything but sympathetic. Elizabeth, so she heard from other sources, was staying with her husband at Cardiff, where, though she did no work, she was being supported by the newly convinced Friends. The loyalty of the infant Church could ill stand the strain of extra expenses.

Holme's reply, spirited as it is, makes painful reading. As long as it was possible, he continued to report his wife's activity in the most glowing terms:

"My wife is in Chester. she hath A generall meting their this day. the mighty power, presence and glory of the lord is with hir to the Astoneshing of all wher she comes."†

Then, at the end of April, he made a pathetic and detailed defence against Margaret Fell's charges:

"Concerning my wife staing in these parts, that was Against mee; for as soone as I receved thy leter I indevered to get hir away, if by any meanes I could, but ther came a stop and it was hindred, and that which stoped hir I beleve will justifie hire; The lord hath provyded a chamber for hir in Cardife, where she Labores with hir hands, and is not chargable; and as much as in hir lyes shee will keep from being borthensome to any. Neither shee nor hir child must perish: nether is shee out of the fear of the Lord as shee is judged to bee: nether was it ever in us to ly the charg of a child upon a compny of new convinced frinds . . . soe everything thou hears is not true. And consarning our goeing together, that shall be mended. . . . And that thou heard ther was noe need of hir being hear, indeed in such a condition ther is not. . . . And for the charge and borthen thou compleanse of concerning our child, it is yet to come,

* Swarthamoor MSS., i. 238, 304.

† *Ibid.*, 202.

And if our goeing together be the ground of what is Against us, the ground shall be removed, for we had both of us determined long befor thy leter came to keep Asunder.”*

Such a letter might well have softened Margaret Fell, herself a rich and happy wife, and the mother of eight children. But she seems to have demanded a yet harder sacrifice. Holme, at this point, crossed the Bristol Channel to consult George Fox, who was lying in the prison at Launceston. In such matters, however, Fox seems to have been content to follow Margaret Fell's judgment, and was chary of giving advice. It would have been better, he thought, if Elizabeth had gone to her friends in the North, but as that was now impossible, “he was not against puting our child forth.” The remainder of the letter, which Holme wrote to Swarthmoor on June 4, breathes a touching submission to the hard will of his superiors. In the previous year he had written to Margaret Fell:

“Judgment is comited into thy hands, and Judgment thou gives to whom judgment belongs, and marcy to whom marcy belongs. Power in heven and in earth is given unto thee, thou glorious daughter of Sion.”†

He was now called upon to show the genuineness of this subjection, and he did not shrink from the proof.

“Whill I was with George,” he writes, “shee was delivered from hir child, and was moved . . . in a crose to hir will to^giv up hire child to the frind which soe long befor had desiared hire . . . soe a way its like will be mad that shee may continue in the ministrey which the desiar of our soules is. . . . Its 8 dayes sence shee was delivered.”

A postscript follows:

“It being seven dayes sence this Above was writen, it being soe I could not send it soner to thee for want of a mesenger, this is therfor to let thee know this day my

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 203.

† *Ibid.*, i. 197.

wife paseth into Munmuthshir to have sune meetings and I pas further into Clamorganshir to a place caled swansee, soe that wee shall be 40 ore fifty miles distenes on from the outhur.”*

When the task fell to Camm a few years later of writing Elizabeth Holme’s obituary, he recorded that

“she and Thomas laboured both together and aparte in the service of truth while she lived, and was a blessing to each other liveing together in much love and Indearednesse.”†

Self-imposed separation it was beyond the power of either to maintain for long. In April of the following year they had met again in Bristol, a course which evidently incurred Margaret Fell’s strong disapproval, and a warning from her of Fox’s displeasure.

“I was with G. f. when hee was in brestoll,” so Holme writes to her, “and Eliz: my wife was ther also, but he said nothing to hir as thou saist in thy leter—if it were soe methinks he should see it and tell hir of it.”

The poor young husband, weary of constant rebuke, had begun to regret his wife’s call to the ministry, and to long for what was granted to less talented couples—the quiet of their own fireside and their children about their knees.

“The lord presarve her in the truth”—so the letter goes on—“shee hath had blows might have stroke hir out of it if shee had not been keep by A secret power. And as for hire ministring abroad, if shee could be clear before god in silence, I could be well contented, and be at more ease. Thou might let hir alone. she sufereth all and replyes not Again. the lord Judg betwixt you have I dishonored thee hearin? ney, I love thee the more . . . forgive mee I pray thee.”‡

Holme’s weakness was as momentary as his flash of rebellion. He parted once more from his wife, and they

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 205.

† “First Publishers of Truth,” p. 260.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 196.

turned their backs for ever upon ease and private happiness. The five years which followed are on her side a chronicle of continuous service and imprisonment in Wales and the Midlands.* In the beginning of 1662 Holme spent three months in the gaol at Cardiff. News was brought to the magistrates that Elizabeth, newly released from Chesterfield prison, had come to the town to see her husband, and they sent messengers through the streets to search for her. But she had left her horse at a Friend's house on her arrival, and gone farther to see her old acquaintance. Thus the messengers sent to seize her failed of their purpose. They contented themselves by arresting the watchman who had allowed the Quaker woman to enter the town, the maidservant who had failed to lay information of her arrival, and the Friend who had stabled her horse. The horse himself, with saddle and bridle, they led away as a hostage. No sooner was the search abandoned than Elizabeth appeared of her own accord before the magistrates, to claim her horse and his harness. A mittimus was immediately made out for her, and she was committed to prison, which was, perhaps, of all places the haven where she would be.†

The marriage had not lasted seven years before Elizabeth's health began to fail, under the complicated strain of hard travel and harder imprisonments, together with frequent separation from all that she held most dear. In 1663 her husband was writing to Fox :

"This may lett thee know why I come not as I intended. My wife hath been very sicke, more then ten days. And at present shee is very weke and sicke, so that at present I am stoped. Shee is trubled with the rising of the mother‡ in one side, and the splin in the other, beside the ston doth

* Besse, vol. i., p. 741.

† *Ibid.* p 748.

‡ This strange expression seems to have signified a form of hysteria. Cf. "Lear," Act II., Scene 4 :

"O, how this mother swells up toward my heart !
Hysterica passio,—down, thou climbing sorrow."

much anoy hire besides sume other destempers, soe Hir body is all out of order. Hir love is dear to thee and shee doth salute thee."*

Two years later Elizabeth died at her home in Kendal. The final parting lasted less than twelve months. In 1666 Thomas Holme himself died at Cardiff, still only thirty-nine years of age. They left three children behind them, of whom two lived to grow up. The mother and father, who had abandoned them to strangers on a point of conscience, were now taken from them by death, and it is no matter of surprise to read in the old chronicle that they "walked not in the steps of their honorable parents."†

The vexed question of the marriage of ministers solved itself automatically as Quakerism was placed on a more settled basis. Meetings, whose foundations had been laid by the "first Publishers," were gradually established throughout England, Wales, and Ireland; and the tendency, particularly with women preachers, was to attach themselves to the Meeting of the town in which they lived, and to confine their religious work within the wide scope of its activities.

The story of George Whitehead's marriage in 1669 is typical of this later period. After much travelling and persecution, he realized that his service henceforth would lie chiefly in London, and that it would be advisable for him to marry a London Friend. His choice fell upon Ann Downer, the widow of Benjamin Greenwell, a woman fifteen years his senior, whom he knew to be "a faithfull antient servant of the Lord and his people," and who proved herself, as he hoped, "a faithfull wife, dear sister, and tender mother in all sufferings."‡

These were, indeed, without affectation, the qualities sought after by intending bridegrooms—another fact,

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 251.

† "First Publishers," p. 260.

‡ Whitehead's "Christian Progress," p. 321. London, 1725.

together, perhaps, with the example set by Fox in this same year of 1669, which may account for the frequent re-marriage of widows at this time.

The welfare of the Quaker Church and the spread of truth were as dear then as they had been in the earliest days of wandering and homelessness. It was to further these ends, and in defiance of any private craving, that young men like Will Caton braced themselves for marriage, finding, to their comfort, that "the thing was made very easy to them, after they gave up to it."* If the suppression or perversion of a noble instinct is ever justified, it was justified in their work and life. The Quaker missionary, man or woman, was but an instrument for the service of God, and it was true then, as it has been true in all ages, that he who loved father or mother, wife or child, more than this service was not worthy of it.

"And to all, ye deare famaly of love,"—so he might say in the words of a new convert in 1652—"My love is rune into you all : you are my relation, father, mother, sisters and brother, which I must now owne."†

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 333.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 4.

CHAPTER VIII.

BARBARA BLAUDONE, A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MILITANT

No problem raised by the early Quaker history is more perplexing than the tale of work which was accomplished by the women, and the vitality which sustained them through cruel suffering and exertion into extreme old age. Their consciousness of the shortness of life, and the necessity of employing it to the most useful purpose, may explain in part their extraordinary capacity for labour. The working life of a Quaker began earlier and continued later than the life of a modern missionary. Many causes contributed to produce a precocious maturity in the children of Friends. Even if games and innocent mirth had not been definitely discouraged, the ever-threatening cloud of imprisonment and separation which hung over their homes would have checked any tendency to frivolity. The frequent removal of both parents threw a weight of responsibility, both in the Church and the home, upon the children, which even the youngest braced himself to carry.

This early maturity, if it accounts in some degree for the amount of work accomplished by the Quakers, renders still more remarkable the great age to which most of the women attained—an old age full of activity, which neither persecution nor suffering had been able to impair. Most of the men-missionaries, on the other hand, died young in prison, or lingered, for the last years of their life, old and broken before their time. An interesting confirmation of this statement is found in the fre-

quent re-marriage of widows, who had entered the ministry at the same time as their first husbands, endured equal hardship and persecution, and lived to become the elderly wives of the second generation of preachers. Fox's own marriage was that of a man, prematurely old at forty-five, to a woman ten years his senior, who, after a life crowded with responsibility, family trouble, travel, and imprisonment, survived him for a full decade.

The object lesson comes the more closely home to one's thoughts in the light of recent events. One cannot doubt that the women of the seventeenth century were cast in a sturdier mould than the women of to-day. They were unhampered by the tradition of indoor elegance, or the standard of fashionable delicacy, which were the heritage left to the race by the two succeeding centuries—a heritage which cannot be altogether outgrown or cast-off in a decade or two of liberty. Modern women may show an equal courage and an equal passion in pursuit of their ideal. But there is a physical limit to our endurance of suffering, which the Quaker woman would scarcely have reckoned as the beginning of hardship; while in silent acceptance of pain unjustly inflicted (a virtue of dubious merit in modern ethics), we are not worthy to be compared with the seventeenth-century missionary. The poor working woman alone has never forfeited her birthright of sturdy limb and unconquerable energy. Any mean street of our modern cities will furnish examples of such feats of heroism or endurance as were shown by the early Quaker women, performed day by day on a less public stage, but from motives equally high and self-sacrificing.

It was the West Country which gave to Quakerism some of its most stalwart women ministers, and, with the single exception of Mary Fisher, its most adventurous woman missionary. A generation earlier, Devon and Somerset had furnished the fleet of Elizabeth with men and com-

manders, and in these very years had sent Admiral Blake from Bridgwater to be Cromwell's right hand upon the seas. So now in 1654, Barbara Blaugdone, a well-connected and elderly governess, came out from Bristol, the most militant of Quaker preachers, and the longest lived of all the women pioneers. The same year marked the convincement of Katherine Evans, a farmer's wife from Englishbatch, near Bath, who was to become familiar with the gaols of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and to lie for three and a half years in the prison-house of Malta, a problem and a burden to the Grand Inquisitor. It was in Cornwall that Loveday Hambly, the rich yeoman's widow with the winsome name, made an oasis of hospitality for the persecuted minister, and earned her title of "nursing mother of the south."

Quakerism was brought to the West Country through two chief channels, and its introduction was as romantic as its later history. Bristol became the scene of the most remarkable of Revivals when it had scarcely yet recovered from the troubles and losses of the Civil War. With a population of 30,000 inhabitants, it had been regarded by both parties as the key to Wales and the West, and throughout the ten years of struggle its history had fluctuated with the fortunes of the war. The city was Royalist in sentiment, until hit by the Royal policy in her most vital interests. King Charles' imposition of Ship-Money, and his interference with trade, particularly his establishment of a monopoly in soap, Bristol's chief manufacture, alienated the sympathies of the inhabitants. In 1643 they opened their gates to the Parliamentary troops. In July of the same year the place was stormed by Prince Rupert, only to be surrendered in 1645 to Fairfax and Cromwell—an act which definitely turned the tide of success in favour of the King's enemies. In 1654 the passions of the Civil War had not yet died down, and twelve months later Cromwell found it

advisable to demolish the castle.* Political insecurity was to lend a peculiar vehemence to the persecution of the Quakers in Bristol.

The month of June, 1654, witnessed that most wonderful movement in early Quakerism, the descent of the northern preachers upon the south. Two years previously Fox, travelling from Yorkshire into Westmorland, had met, for the second time, with a large and earnest community of Seekers. Led by their ministers, Howgill and Audland, they gathered round him to the number of many hundreds. Within a few weeks he was able to establish regular meetings at six distinct places in Westmorland, which formed the training-ground of the pioneers who were to evangelize the south.†

This great enterprise may have been suggested by an invitation from the newly planted church in London. But the missionaries travelled by two and two—"morris-dancers from the north"—in the phrase of a priest with a turn for caricature) and this association, together with Fox's computation of a "matter of 70 ministers," seems to indicate that they were acting on the model of the sending forth of the Seventy by our Lord Himself.‡ In point of fact, the pioneer work in the south was begun by six men, who set out for London towards the end of June, there dividing their forces amongst the three chief towns of the South of England—London, Norwich, and Bristol. It is with John Audland and John Camm, the missionaries to Bristol, that we have now to do.

Audland was at this time a young man of twenty-four years of age. A linen-draper by trade, he had been a paid lay-preacher amongst the Independents, until Fox's coming opened his eyes to a more heart-felt and earnest service. No sooner was he convinced than he went with

* Article on Bristol in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," ninth edition.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 148; and Braithwaite, p. 151 *et seq.*

‡ Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 141.

his colleague and fellow-convert, Francis Howgill, and, as Fox relates, "restored the money they had formerly received for preaching, and went and preacht freely ye everlastinge gospell."* Audland's young wife Ann became a preacher at the same time—known to the authorities as "that prating woman Audler." But the tender letters which followed her husband from place to place upon his missions form a charming interlude in a chronicle of ungrudging labour and bitter persecution.

Audland was made at once to taste the fruits of his conviction. In 1653 he was imprisoned in Newcastle for preaching, and in the same year he was in York Castle, a fellow-prisoner with Mary Fisher and Elizabeth Hooton. The injustice of these sentences had impelled him to go up to London, with his friend John Camm, to plead with Cromwell on behalf of the Friends in Yorkshire.

Like his companion, Camm was a convert from the Westmorland Seekers, for whom he, too, had been an occasional preacher. A much older man than Audland, his conviction had entailed the abandonment of a prosperous business, and a comfortable home upon his own land. At fifty years of age he took up the homeless and persecuted life of a Quaker preacher.

No sooner had Camm and Audland arrived in Bristol than it became evident that the history of their own conviction was about to repeat itself. They met at once with a community of Seekers, "humble and tender" souls, who were looking in prayer and fasting for the light which was now to be brought to them. Their receptive attitude aroused a corresponding power in the two missionaries. In a couple of days the private houses were unable to hold their congregations, who flocked "like an army" to meetings in the fields outside the city. The Seekers were not the only inhabitants who opened their hearts to the Quaker message. Great meetings were held amongst the garrison left by Cromwell and

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 324.

Fleetwood. The Commander of the Fort and three of his Captains became prominent Friends. In November Camm was able to report :

“We have here in Bristol most commonly 3,000 to 4,000 at a meeting. The priests and magistrates of the city begin to rage, but the soldiers keep them down.”

It was not likely that so great a movement could be set on foot without opposition from the regular clergy. The Broadmead Baptist Church had lost one-fourth of its members, one of whom, Dennis Hollister, a Member of Parliament, lent his orchard for the meeting. Farmer, a Presbyterian minister, not content with holding the evangelists up to ridicule by the nickname of “morris dancers,” stirred up the city apprentices to riot, and the mob which collected to back them was only dispersed by the intervention of the friendly soldiers.

Bristol Quakerism was barely six months old when the full force of persecution was let loose upon it—the first of the three persecutions which were to win for it the name of the bravest and most suffering community in the provinces. Many Friends were thrown into prison on frivolous pretexts, and kept there without trial, while their houses were stormed by the rabble on pretence of discovering treasonable meetings.

The authorities looked on with apprehension, not daring to interfere, lest they should imperil the doubtful loyalty of Bristol to the Parliament. A large proportion of the populace were known to be Royalists, and suspected, not without evidence, of a desire to turn the continued disturbances to the profit of their party. To add to the disquiet, a rumour was set on foot identifying the Quakers with the Jesuits, and their leaders with “certain persons of the Franciscan Order in Rome, who have of late come over to England.” This accusation recurred continually during the coming years, and was revived nearly a century

later to meet the case of John Wesley, when he arrived in Bristol upon a like errand.

The Friends, after their manner, were at no pains to conciliate their enemies. They recognized the work of the "priests" in the persecution which had overtaken them, and continued the interruption of "command" services with redoubled vigour. Women converts distinguished themselves by calling down woe upon the officiating clergyman, or walking through the streets of the city in sackcloth and ashes. Representations were finally made to Cromwell, who, with the evidence before him, could not but withdraw his protection from a sect which threatened the peace of the community. Fortunately, when the warrant was issued to apprehend Camm and Audland, they had already quitted Bristol.*

Amongst these scenes, Barbara Blaugdone, who was to become one of their most noted travellers and preachers, threw in her lot with the Quakers. As in the case of all women who joined the Friends late in life, her early history can only be pieced together from hints and inferences. In the year 1691 she published her autobiography, "An Account of the Travels, Sufferings and Persecutions of Barbara Blaugdone"; but its sole direct reference to the first forty-five years of her life, is found in the statement that "she feared the Lord and sought him earnestly in youth." Meagre as this is, it places her with some degree of certainty in the community of Seekers who welcomed Camm and Audland to Bristol. In the mittimus which committed her to prison in her old age she is described as a widow, but there is no mention of her husband from first to last in any Quaker source. Before her conviction she was on intimate terms with various titled and noble families, and in all her subsequent travels she was never indebted to the Quaker Funds for her support. It is probable that her husband,

* Besse, vol. i., pp. 39-41; and Sewel, vol. i., pp. 155-164. For a modern account, see Braithwaite, pp. 165-173.

like herself, was well-connected, but died in early youth, leaving her only a slender fortune. Besse's chronicler reports that Barbara was "a woman of good parts and education," and she set herself in her young widowhood to supplement her income by teaching. Without stretch of fancy one can trace the pedagogue in her later acts and speeches; like the apostolic bishop, she was apt to teach, and never lost the self-confidence which is born of authority.

The coming of Audland and Camm to Bristol brought about a revolution, not only in her ideal of conduct, but in her whole manner of life. John Audland, according to Sewel, was a young man, "of a comely countenance, and very lovely qualities." Barbara confirms this description by her statement that "the Behaviour and Deportments" of both the preachers "were such, that it preached before ever they opened their Mouths." She tells very simply how "they directed her Mind unto the Light of Christ, therein to wait." But this was not the confession of a Quietist. The waiting of the early Quakers was the preparation for their doing, and the first year of Barbara Blaugdone's conviction was crowded almost beyond endurance with suffering and activity.

A strange career was now opening before this middle-aged and highly respectable governess. She was about forty-six years old at the time of her conviction, and the enthusiasm of youth could no longer urge or sustain her. Yet she began henceforth to walk a lonely road, careless of criticism and unshackled by convention. She set herself deliberately to subdue her body, recognizing her most dangerous enemy in the craving for good living and soft clothing. She abstained from all meat during the year which followed her conviction, and drank nothing but water. Twice during her early imprisonments she endured a voluntary hunger-strike.

The change in her speech and dress involved in her acceptance of Quakerism resulted in the estrangement of

her employers, and the loss of almost all her pupils. But her newly practised frugality allowed her still to live in independence.

At the end of a strenuous half-century she was able to boast—

“In all my Travels I Travelled still on my own Purse, and was never chargeable to any, but paid for what I had.”

The new life within her could not limit its working to her own experience. The conviction was forming in her mind that she was called to go out into the streets and churches and call her neighbours to repentance. This can have been no light task in a city where she was well known and respected, and she admits that she

“passed through much exercise in the performance of it. I was never hasty nor forward,” she writes, yet, as she sat amidst the congregation, “the Power and Spirit of the Lord was so strong in me that it set me upon my Feet and constrained me to speak the words.”

The only visible result of these first efforts was an imprisonment of three months in the Bridewell of Bristol—a noisome place, with which she was to become only too familiar in future years, while the cruelties perpetrated within it made its name notorious throughout England.

The first impetus to wider activity may have come to Barbara Blaugdone on her release by the visit of Mary Prince, herself a travelling preacher, and one of Fox’s most fervent admirers. The autobiography records an adventure which befell the two women in the open street, and gives a glimpse of the dangers which lay in wait for the Quakers during the performance of their ordinary religious duties.

Barbara was coming home, arm-in-arm with Mary, from a meeting in a private house. They were stopped on their way by a “rude man,” who, not content with abusing them in words, knocked off Mary Prince’s

hat, and thrust a sharp knife into Barbara's side, which passed through all her clothes, and narrowly escaped causing her death. Her sole comment on this brutality was that "my Soul was so in love with the Truth that I could have given up my Life for it at that day."

Her first service outside her native city seems to have been at Basingstoke, where, in July, 1655, two travelling preachers had been cast into prison for refusing the oath of abjuration. Barbara was the bearer of a letter written to the prisoners from John Camm, the missionary who had "convinced" her in the previous year; but she was denied admission to the gaol, and had to content herself with slipping the paper through a chink in the door. She then went to the Mayor to plead for the release of her friends, who had already spent fifteen weeks in prison, or at the least that she might have permission to visit them. The Mayor replied, with a fine display of arbitrary authority, that if he saw the letter which she had introduced into the prison, he would release the prisoners. The Quakers were credited with the circulation of seditious literature, and this request gave Barbara a welcome opportunity of disproving the libel. She fetched the letter and left it that night with the Mayor.

Next day, nothing daunted by the fate of the last Quaker visitors, she attended a "fine meeting" in the town. Coming away, she met the priest whom she probably suspected of the guilt of their imprisonment, and records with obvious satisfaction that she "told him his portion." The priest of Basingstoke proved a less revengeful opponent than those who commonly came into collision with the Quakers. He forbore to use his influence against the prisoners, and the Mayor, finding no trace of treason in their correspondence, in a few days set them at liberty.

The story of the next two years holds that strange interlude in her service to the West Country—the missionary journeys to Ireland—and is told in a subsequent chapter.

This period between 1655 and 1657 lives most vividly in her autobiography, and the thrilling narrative gains rather than loses by her quiet matter-of-fact relation of imprisonments, shipwreck, and robbery by pirates. Nor is its interest purely personal. Through the report of her interview with Henry Cromwell the quaint precise memoir is caught up for a moment into the current of contemporary history, and Barbara Blaugdone takes a place, however humble, amongst the influences which moulded Ireland.

Scarcely had she returned to her home, when her restless missionary spirit drove her forth again, through the south and west of England. Her first journey was to Marlborough, where she attended the parish church, and began to address the congregation at the close of service. It was a common complaint with the Quakers that the riots which frequently preceded their arrest arose from the violence of their captors, and not from their own preaching. According to a letter sent to Cromwell by one of the sufferers, the judge's formula was a simple one :

"Come, what have you here? a Quaker? Write his mittimus: away to prison with him. . . . Let him be sent to prison because he is a Quaker, and let them that beat him be set free, who make(s) the disturbance."

On this occasion the intruder was struck on the breast by the outraged parishioners, and thrust out of the building. Not content with this mishandling, they haled her before the magistrate, who committed her to Bridewell, where she lay for six weeks.

For six days and nights of this imprisonment she refused all food and drink. The fast was not undertaken as a protest against her sentence—indeed, the motive which prompted it might with equal fitness have been indulged at home. But the enforced leisure gave an opportunity for the "exercise" which her busy everyday life could not have offered; while her situation amongst the prisoners lent publicity to the lesson which she wished

to enforce. Her desire was to prove to herself, as well as to those who surrounded her, the truth that man need not live by bread alone. She had no suspicion that her abstention was an act of martyrdom which called for admiration and sympathy.

Yet the effect of her fast must have been written upon her face. A friend of hers, pitying her evident suffering, went to the Mayor, whose name was Burgess, and offered himself to lie in prison in her stead. This dignitary, with an insolent disregard for either justice or mercy, surlily answered, "I'll have you both"—a frequent result of such petitions. The chivalrous Quaker was flogged, and confined with his friend in Bridewell, where he languished for twenty-two weeks.

Undaunted by past failure, Barbara sought out the unjust judge on her release. But this time, perhaps because she confined herself to private reproaches, the oppressor was entirely won over to the side of his victim. Burgess was never afterwards known to persecute the Quakers, but protected them as far as he could in all their further troubles in the town of Marlborough. So great was the sympathy aroused in him by this interview, that he went to see Barbara Blaugdone on his next visit to Bristol. In her own house he acknowledged the truth of her doctrine, but confessed very ingenuously that "he could not take up the cross to walk in that way."

Barbara's travels now led her into Devonshire, where she visited Molton, Barnstaple, and Bideford, "in all which places," as Sewel briefly records, "a prison was her lot." She came in her wanderings near the residence of the Earl of Bath, an acquaintance of old days, and a house where she "had formerly spent much time in vanity." She decided to summon him also to repentance—a task, one suspects, considerably harder than the addressing of a strange congregation in an unknown steeple-house. Her reception was not encouraging. The servant who answered her knock refused to admit her to

speak to the Countess. While she lingered on the step, a second servant, who recognized her, sent her round to the back-door, promising that the lady would find her there on her way into the garden. It seems that the faithful retainers hoped to spare their mistress a disagreeable interview. As the Quaker preacher reached the back-door, a huge mastiff dog was let loose from within and rushed fiercely towards her.

Then follows one of those strange deliverances whose story occurs so frequently in Fox's Journal. He himself affords the most striking example of a will which could impress itself, not only upon a raging mob, but upon the sick, the paralyzed, and the hopeless. Barbara Blaugdone, though she had a less lovable and attractive nature, revealed the same strain of mysticism, and seems in some degree to have shared the same powers. She relates without comment: "The Power of the Lord smote the Dog, so that he whined and ran in crying, and very Lame."

Lady Bath came out before long to walk in the garden. Astonished as she must have been to meet her former friend at the back-door in her plain dress, she wondered yet more when Barbara, without so much as a curtsy or a Good-day, began to address her on the subject of religion. In the old days she had frequently stayed at the house, and eaten and drunk at her table. Now the Countess, as she listened to her old friend, was struck by something akin to fear. Though she thanked her for her exhortation, she gave her no invitation to cross the threshold, or to renew her former intimacy. The Quaker preacher went on her way, footsore and disappointed.

She reached Great Torrington before nightfall, where, as Besse's chronicler records, there was a "very bad priest indeed." As her custom was, she attended the steeplehouse on the following Sunday morning and delivered an address to the congregation. No prophetic gift was needed to foretell the result of this challenge. For the

moment, however, the "very bad priest" was content to bide his time.

She had found it impossible to speak all that was in her mind, and she returned to her lodgings to write what had been left unsaid. This was a usual course with the travelling preachers, whose sermons were subject to interruption or curtailment by their audience. The "Works" of the early Quakers are largely composed of "Solemn Calls," or "Grievous Lamentations," addressed to the towns through which they had passed. As Barbara Blaugdone sat writing later in the day the constables broke in upon her, confiscating her manuscript, and commanding her to go with them to the afternoon service. The priests had a certain right to commandeer their congregation, but their authority did not reach beyond one attendance on each Sunday. Barbara was acquainted with the law, and refused to accompany the constables. She remarked very honestly that she had no wish to go where she was not allowed to speak, and added, with a touch of grim humour, "You all know that I was there in the morning."

The constables were repulsed for the time, but returned next day to carry her before the Mayor. Here the priest was awaiting her, and she found, as was frequently the case, the minister of the Gospel more unmerciful than the servant of the law. The Mayor was unwilling to commit her, but the priest pointed out that Queen Elizabeth's law against sturdy vagabonds, which had been revived in the previous year of 1656, might be fitly applied in her case, and suggested that the travelling preacher should be whipped as a vagrant. For the second time the prisoner challenged his legal knowledge, and demanded proof that she had ever asked anyone for a bit of bread. Driven to state his real grievance, the priest replied that she had broken the law by speaking in their church, and he forced the Mayor, without further parley, to commit her to Exeter Gaol, twenty miles distant.

The enmity of "priests and professors," though it was earned in great measure by the Friends' own unwisdom and tactlessness, was always the bitterest drop in the cup of their persecution. Barbara Blaugdone, confined by the priest's insistence in the prison at Exeter, was so burdened by the sense of the injustice and cruelty of those who were called her fellow-Christians, that for fourteen days and nights she tasted no food, "which I performed," she explains, "as a Witness against that dark, professing People." This time no friend took pity upon her, nor interceded, however vainly, with her persecutors.

The Assizes came and went, and still she lay untried. At last she was summoned before some subordinate official, who read a law in her presence which had no application to her offence—probably the Vagrancy Act, which she had repudiated on her first arrest. As though to enforce the application, she was taken back to the common prison, and lodged that night with a great company of gipsies, sufferers under the Act.

"The next day," so runs the autobiography, "the Sheriff came with a Beadle, and had me into a room, and whipt me till the Blood ran down my back, and I never startled at a blow: but the Lord made me to rejoyce that I was counted worthy to suffer for his Name's sake and I sung aloud. And the Beadle said, 'Do ye Sing? I shall make ye cry by and by,' and with that he laid more stripes and laid them on very hard. I shall never forget the large Experience of the Love and Power of God which I had . . . for if he had whipt me to Death in that State which then I was in, I should not have been terrified or dismayed at it."

Recognizing at last that it was impossible to break the prisoner's spirit, the Sheriff ordered the beadle to cease, for he had already exceeded his orders. One indignity had been spared her. Whereas Mary Fisher and Elizabeth Fletcher had endured the lash in public at the Town Cross, the only witness of Barbara's flogging was a fellow-Quaker, Ann Speed, who stood looking in at

the window, and weeping bitterly. After the beadle had been dismissed, this compassionate woman was allowed to come into the prison and dress the sufferer's wounds.

One more night was spent in the company of the gipsies, and then the Quaker prisoner was turned out of the gaol with them—the beadle following the sorry procession till they were two miles from the city.

In this month of October, 1657, Barbara Blaugdone was fifty years of age. She was weakened by a hunger-strike of a fortnight's duration, a brutal flogging, and, one may safely assume, two sleepless nights. Yet on her release from prison she had both will and strength to add four miles to her necessary journey, and to undertake an errand which was full of peril.

Quakerism had found a lodgment in Exeter in the same wonderful year of 1654 which had witnessed the mission to Bristol. Henceforth the prison had seldom been empty of Quakers, and at the time of Barbara's confinement several city Friends were in the Bridewell, imprisoned, perhaps, as a sequel to Fox's visit to Exeter in the previous March. She had no mind to submit to this summary parting. As soon as the beadle was of sight, she, too, turned her face back to the city, determined to visit the prison again, and leave behind her some word of farewell and encouragement. It is almost incredible that she should have escaped a second arrest, yet amidst the constant coming and going of prisoners' friends her presence passed without notice. When she had taken leave of her late companions, she passed on without pause to Topsham, which she reached the same night. Her remark that she was "sweetly refreshed" at a "fine meeting" which she attended on her arrival is her only indirect hint of suffering and fatigue. After one night spent in the peace of a Friend's house, she set her face towards home.

Striking across Devonshire, she lost her way upon the wide stretch of Dartmoor, where no house could be seen

for miles. She met no living thing but the wild ponies and mountain sheep, and heard no voice but the cry of the plover. "But the Lord," she says, "was with me, and did direct me." She came at last to Bideford, no nearer home, for all her travelling, than when she had left Exeter.

Here she attended a private meeting, at which she spoke, glad to be once more within reach of human intercourse. But persecution followed her in every inhabited place. She was taken to the Town Hall, and under the Vagrancy Act, ignominiously searched for knife or scissors. This elderly governess seemed so desperate a character to the authorities, and her address so fierce and denunciatory, that for the second time in her history she was suspected of murderous designs.

The Mayor of Bideford, before whom she was summoned the next day, proved himself a sympathetic hearer, with a turn for dramatic action. Opening two doors which led from opposite sides of his private room, he gave his visitor her choice, whether to go to prison or to go home. For the moment her workaday common sense was in the ascendant, and she chose the door leading to liberty.

But the Mayor's curiosity had been aroused by their brief interview. Calling for his horse, he rode after the Quaker woman to question her further. He overtook her on the road, and offered her a seat behind him. Before she could mount, a traveller appeared in the distance, and the Mayor dropped behind till he had passed. When this manœuvre had been repeated two or three times, Barbara refused on her part to talk longer with a man so obviously ashamed to be seen in her company. But they had already travelled three or four miles together, and now as he took his leave she fell on her knees and prayed with him by the roadside. The impression he had received was deepened by a letter which she subsequently wrote to him, and, like the Mayor of Marlborough, "he grew solid and sober" as the result of their meeting.

Barbara was journeying now through Devon and Somerset, along that glorious coast-road which in another hundred years was to become the haunt of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the birthplace of the "Ancient Mariner." Thirty years after she had travelled it, it would hear the tramp of Monmouth's army, and carry pursuer and pursued as they fled from Sedgemoor. But Barbara writes no word of sea or moorland, and her journey from Bideford is passed over in a phrase. "In my travels, coming to Bridgwater, I spoke to a priest called Piggot."

The steeple-house of Bridgwater, which had thus claimed the attention of the militant Quaker, was the beautiful parish church of St. Mary's, whose spire, rising from a low tower, is the loftiest in Somerset, and a landmark at sea and ashore. Here, on a day in July, 1685, Monmouth was to climb with his officers, to gain what last desperate hope he might from the position of the enemy. This, though Barbara Blaugdone lived to see it, lay a generation ahead. On that winter afternoon of 1657 the intrusion of the Quaker woman caused a sufficient scandal and heart-searching amongst the towns-people. She had insulted their clergyman, and Mr. Piggot presided over a loyal parish.

On her first arrival Barbara had engaged a room in the inn. But now, returning from her visit to the steeple-house, she was refused admission—a form of boycotting which was a favourite weapon against the Quakers.

The night was piercingly cold, and a thick frost lay on the ground.

"I found the Pig-stye swept very clean, and the Trough turned up, and never a Pig in it. And I sate me down on the Trough, and that was my Lodging all that Night."

Next day the fates were kinder, and though she was still refused a bed in the inns which she came to, a barn sheltered her from the frost. Without further event recorded, she came home to Bristol.

Her Memoirs close with her return from this journey, though they were not published until 1691, nearly half a century later, and three years after the cessation of persecution. As they were written expressly to encourage Friends in their sufferings by the example of her deliverance, it seems likely that they had had a private circulation before they were finally "Printed and Sold by T. S. at the Crooked-Billet, in Holywell-Lane, Shoreditch." This is the more probable, since her "Sufferings and Persecutions" did not by any means cease with the record of them, though this journey through Devon and Somerset seems to have marked the end of her "Travels." Half of her long life still remained to be lived—a period of forty-seven years—lighted up here and there by brief references in Besse's "Sufferings," and by one vivid paragraph in a contemporary history of Quakerism in the West of England.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST QUAKER WOMEN IN IRELAND

QUAKERISM won its first foothold in Ireland, in 1653, in the person of an ex-trooper of Cromwell's army. William Edmundson was a fitting pioneer in that distressful country, at a time when the representative Irishman was an English settler or an English soldier. Eight years of anarchy, following upon the massacre of 1641, had decimated the country, and Cromwell's "settlement," known to this day as the "Curse of Cromwell," completed the work of depopulation. Forty-five thousand "Kurisees," the pick of the Irish fighting men, were now hired out amongst the armies of Europe. The "incurably turbulent," together with all convicted of the massacre of the Protestants, had been hanged. Those of the Papist aristocracy who escaped this classification had forfeited their estates, and were living in banishment in the wilds of Connaught. Only the lowest of the people, farm-labourers or mechanics, were exempt from punishment, and were invited to return to their homes, and resume their daily tasks under new masters.*

Englishmen, meanwhile, continued to cross the Irish Sea to occupy the estates left vacant through death or forfeiture. But the imported population had made little impression as yet upon the face of the land; only here and there the towns were beginning to take on the aspect of drab respectability. When Fox landed in Dublin in 1669, exactly twenty years after the storming of Drog-

* "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches" (Carlyle), vol. ii., p. 260.

heda, the horror of the long years of bloodshed had not yet faded.

“Soe when wee came on shore, ye Earth and ye very aire, smelt with ye corruption of the Nation, and gave Another smell then England to mee, with ye corruption and ye blood, and the Massacres, and ye foulennesse yt Asscended.”*

William Edmundson, the first Quaker in Ireland, had served in the Scottish campaign under Cromwell himself, and, on his discharge after the Battle of Worcester, had married and crossed over to Ireland, where his brother was still in active service. The young couple took with them their servant and household goods, together with a consignment of merchandise, with which they proposed to open a shop in their adopted country. The Plague had followed Cromwell, and on Edmundson's arrival in Dublin he found houses very cheap and trade very brisk, and “was importuned,” as he says, “to open a business in that city”; but his brother's regiment was quartered in Antrim, and declining all invitations to settle and make their fortune in the capital, the little household travelled north with their goods.

These were soon sold out, and Edmundson crossed to England to replenish his stock. It was on this return visit that he first came into contact with the Quakers. He had long been attracted to them by the reports which had reached him, probably from his fellow-soldiers. Now, in this year of 1653, he heard James Nayler preach, and one short sermon convinced him of the truth of their message.

Edmundson's wholeheartedness and courage appeared at once on his return to Ireland. Although still “in misery and doubt,” he began without reservation to remodel his life upon the new teaching. He refused to take the usual oath at the Customs, and all but failed to get his goods into the country from the English boat. News of his

■ Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 137.

action spread through the English colony, and led to wide discussion of the principles and faith which had prompted it.

In the following year he removed to Lurgan, where the first settled Meeting of the Quakers in Ireland was held at his house. Here he began to adopt the practice of "going to steeple-houses," which had aroused the enmity of the priests in England and alienated the sympathy of the Protector. Like results followed in Ireland. At the instigation of the priests, the people turned against the Quaker preachers. Belfast, "a town of great profession," shut its ears to their gospel, and only one out of all the inns in the city would allow them a night's lodging. After persecution, limited to stones and abuse, Edmundson was thrown into prison at Armagh.*

The year 1655 marked the organized invasion of Ireland by the English Quakers. Elizabeth Fletcher, a girl of sixteen, who arrived with a companion at the beginning of the year, is one of the most pathetic figures among the early Quaker women. Like Edward Burrough, who was shortly to join her in Dublin, she was "one of the worthies early raised up in the north to alarm the south," and began to preach up and down England when little more than a child. She was fifteen years old when she was so cruelly ill-used in Oxford, both by students and city authorities, that her health was permanently injured, and though she continued for a few years longer to preach and travel, she died in 1658, still under twenty years of age.

While the marks of her brutal flogging in the market-place were yet fresh upon her, she crossed over to Dublin, and was at once committed to the Fleet Prison with her friend, Elizabeth Smith, for preaching to the congregation in the church of "St. Audeon's." On their release the two girls stayed for a while in the city, spreading their

* "History of the Rise and Progress of the People called Quakers in Ireland," by John Rutt, pp. 83-89. Dublin, 1751.

message, perhaps, in less obtrusive ways. The first Quaker Meeting was set up in Dublin during their ministry, "at the chamber of Richard Fowkes, a tailor, in Polegate."*

At this point Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough came over from London, and worked for three weeks with the women pioneers. The zeal of the six northern missionaries to the south of England was now driving them farther afield. While Camm and Audland visited Bristol, Burrough and Howgill had remained behind in London, till in this year of 1655 they were both summoned by an inward call to carry the message into Ireland. Burrough, well known and loved by Ellwood as a "brisk young man of a ready tongue," was an outcast from his home at Underbarrow on account of his Quaker sympathies, and had a record of activity and suffering up and down England which seems out of all proportion with his twenty-two years of life or three years of service. Howgill, his companion, a man twice his age, was one of the most distinguished writers of the early Friends, and had been Audland's colleague and fellow-preacher amongst the Seekers of Westmorland.

One is struck in these records of "revival" by the absence of all mention of the class which we are accustomed to regard as the "lower," the object most suitable in modern eyes for evangelistic effort. It is probable that in England at least the "submerged tenth" had not yet made its appearance. A tribe of mendicants, it is true, had survived the Golden Age of monastic relief, and were numerous enough in the days of Elizabeth to call forth an Act for the suppression of "vagabonds and sturdy beggars." Their ranks were largely recruited from women of bad life, and from real or feigned madmen, of whom Edgar in "King Lear" is the classic example. They formed a small nomadic class, moved on from market-town to market-town by the lash of the beadle's whip. Thanks to the small population, the absence of machinery,

■ Ruttys "History," p. 92.

and the abundance of self-respecting labour in country and town, no gulf of poverty had yet opened beneath the lower middle class. In Ireland, however, a state of destitution without parallel even in our modern cities had been created artificially. Differences of nationality raised a formidable barrier between class and class, while religious and racial hatred, and the memory of mutual injustice and barbarity, forbade any attempt at reconciliation.

When the English Quakers arrived in Ireland they addressed themselves, as at home, to the respectable and law-abiding among the English settlers and in the towns. Their ignorance of Erse may have presented an insuperable difficulty; but they seem to have felt no desire to reach the unhappy natives, who were casually stigmatized by Howgill as "robbers and murderers." Burrough stated the case plainly in a letter to Margaret Fell:

"Our service lies only in great townes and cittyes, for generally the country is without inhabitant, except bands of murderers and thieves and Robers, which waites for their prey, and Devoures many, from which yet we are preserved."

For the exotic population he had even harder words: "This is a rebellious people, and uncircumcised wholly, even they are the scume of england and other nations."*

After three weeks' work in common, Howgill and Elizabeth Smith parted from their companions and passed on into the country. The forlorn letter sent to Margaret Fell by the boy and girl who were left alone to evangelize Dublin sounds, from the faded manuscript, like the cry of a lost child:

"Litle Elizabeth ffile: is at present here, but I know not how longe she stayes: her deare love is to thee . . . trully I suffer for her, she being as it were alone, haveinge noe other woman with her, in this ruinous nation, where it is verie bad travelling everie way a foote, and also

dangerous (but we are much above all that). If it were ye will of ye lord yt any women were moved to come over to her.”*

The appeal was not made in vain. Four months later, writing from Waterford, Burrough was able to report with chastened satisfaction :

“ There is at Dublin six of our brethren and sisters, in bonds [four men, whom he names], Elizabeth Morgan and Rebecca Ward, taken without anything being laid against them.”

Before these reinforcements reached Dublin, however, Elizabeth Fletcher had gone south to Cork, where, with Elizabeth Smith, she became the first preacher of Quakerism. They were joined by Burrough and Howgill, now reunited after four months of most unwilling separation.

Meanwhile, in the beginning of 1656, Barbara Blaugdone in Bristol had “drawings for Cork.” Apart from the attraction of friends and relatives living in that city, it is most probable that Burrough’s appeal, published by Margaret Fell in the various Monthly Meetings, had turned her thoughts to Ireland. She sailed from Bristol in March, in a vessel bound for Cork, and was met from the first by bad weather. As the storm increased, the sailors conspired against the Quaker preacher as the Jonah of their fortunes, and were only prevented from throwing her overboard by her prompt appeal to the Captain. When Sunday came the vessel was still driving before the gale, and the priest on board, paralyzed with fear, was unable to undertake the service. Again Barbara was quick to seize her opportunity. She went on deck, and, calling the crew together, she prayed and exhorted them, till they became “very quiet and sedate.” Won by her fearlessness, they thanked her heartily at the close of the service for taking the place of their cowardly chaplain.

The Captain now abandoned the hope of reaching

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 17.

Cork, and made for Dublin Harbour, which he gained in safety. Barbara had turned the tables upon her enemies, and they stepped on shore, wondering at the extraordinary providence which had brought them, without loss, through so great a storm.

Barbara had probably intended to join Burrough and Howgill, whom she had met in Bristol two years before, at the time of her convincement. But during the interval of her perilous passage the Quakers in Ireland had come under the unfavourable notice of the Government, and the day of her arrival in Dublin was the day of the banishment of her two friends, by order of Henry Cromwell.*

The religious controversies which hampered the work of the English Government were reproduced in the sister country, still bleeding though she was from massacre and war. Burrough had been distressed on his arrival by the evidences of spiritual pride in the governing class :

“Generally ye rulers in this nation are Baptists,” so he wrote to Margaret Fell, “but are seated in Darkenes and . . . have turned their victory into their own exaltinge.”†

The advent of the Quakers introduced a new element into the struggle between Baptists and Independents. The young Deputy was deluged with complaints of their disintegrating influence upon the Army, and in February, 1656, he himself was writing home that “the most considerable enemy seemed to him to be the Quakers.” He had heard that their meetings in Cork were being attended by the chief officers and many of the soldiers, and “I think,” he wrote, “their principles and practices are not very consistent with civil government, much less with the discipline of an army.”‡

* The Protector’s second son had been commissioned in 1655 to command the forces in Ireland, and to do duty for Fleetwood, the Deputy, during his absence in London. In Carlyle’s phrase, he was “a man of real insight, veracity, and resolution”—qualities which were sorely needed in the task which he now undertook.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 16.

‡ Thurloe, State Papers, iv. 508, quoted in Braithwaite, p. 215.

Since the early days in 1650, when a newly formed regiment in Derby had clamoured for Fox to be their Captain, his personality and message had held an extraordinary attraction for the Puritan Army. There is no evidence that he himself ever attempted to wean them from their profession ; rather, as his manner was, he left the doctrine which he had implanted to work out its own unaided and inevitable conclusion. In his "Addresses to Soldiers," he seems to have confined himself, like John the Baptist, to practical advice on the performance of their duties.

"All you souldiers," so runs one of his letters, "know a souldiers place, and see that yee be souldiers qualified, that you doe accuse noe man falsly, that you doe violence to noe man, and that yee be content with yower wages : soe then you will see what yower sword is to, it is to be laide upon all that doe violence, and all false accusers."*

But a Quaker soldier, as Fox himself was well aware, was a contradiction in terms. The acceptance of the Gospel, as the Quakers accepted it, could not be made consistent with the bearing of arms. Even the wearing of a sword for fashion's sake soon became impossible to such converts as Ellwood and William Penn. This fact was recognized, not by Fox alone, but by the most obscure of his preachers, both men and women. Two typical "papers" may be mentioned amongst scores dealing with the subject: "A Testimony of some of the Soldiers that were turned out of the Army who owned themselves to be Quakers, 1657,"† and, in 1653, "Agnes Wilkinson's paper to All yt weare swordes"—with its uncompromising exordium: "Strep yourselves Naked of all your carnell weapons, and take unto you the Sword of the Spiret."‡

The letters which Burrough wrote during his stay in Munster were not reassuring to a suspicious Government.

* Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 68.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 237.

‡ *Ibid.*, 228.

"A Discovery of the Idol Dumb Shepherds in Ireland, and a Lamentation over their starved and strayed Flocks"; and, more questionable still: "An Invitation to all the Poor Desolate Soldiers to repent and make their Peace with the Lord, and their Duty shewed them, what the Lord requires of them."

At last the order, diligently sought by the priests and professors, was sent down from headquarters. Burrough and Howgill were arrested in Cork, and escorted under guard from garrison to garrison, until they came to Dublin. But so friendly was their guard that the journey was like a royal progress, and the prisoners held meetings in every town through which they passed. In the capital they were lodged at the house of the Serjeant-at-Arms, where, it is recorded, "they had some service with those who came to visit them." The Council decreed their banishment, and the day of Barbara Blaugdone's landing in Dublin witnessed the "violent haling" of the two Quaker preachers on board a ship bound for England.*

Hearing this bad news, Barbara went at once to the Deputy's house to reason with him upon his action. Admittance was denied her, on the ground that the Council had that day banished two of her fellow-Quakers, which, from her point of view, was the justification for her visit. She then applied to the Deputy's Secretary, who told her that he did not think it was in his power to obtain her an interview. She pressed him only to inform his master that a woman was below desiring to see him, then if he refused, "she was answered."

Presently a messenger came down to fetch her into the withdrawing room, where a little comedy, a conscious reminiscence, it may be, of the Dauphin's trial of Joan of Arc, had been arranged for the Deputy's amusement. The door opened, and a dignified figure (a priest named Harrison, as afterwards appeared) advanced into the

* Rutt's "History," p. 94.

room with his hat upon his head, the remaining company grouping themselves around him, bareheaded. But when the silent Quaker visitor was asked why she did not address the Deputy, "she, being a discreet and discerning woman, replied: 'When I see your Lord, I shall do my message to him.'"

Afterwards Henry Cromwell came into the apartment, and took his seat upon a couch. Then Barbara, standing up, began to deliver her message. She spoke with singular moderation, evidently recognizing the difficulties which hampered the Deputy in his office. She admitted that the guilt of persecution lay not so much with him, as with the "evil magistrates and bad priests." Yet it was being carried on in his name and by his authority, and would lie heavy on his conscience at the last. Warming to the congenial topic of the influence of the priests, she grew eloquent upon the anomalies of their position and maintenance. (Henry Cromwell was only twenty-eight years of age, and blessed with his father's gift of humour. Turning to the priest who stood uneasily beside him, he remarked: "There's for you, Mr. Harrison.")

But his visitor's earnestness had appealed to the Deputy's love of fair play and his ambition to govern rightly—qualities which were to win him that great popularity in Ireland to which even Clarendon was constrained to bear witness. As she pursued her argument and strengthened it with the words of Scripture, he turned again to the priest, asking him what he had to say in reply. The unhappy Harrison made but a lame defence. "It was all very true and good, and he had nothing to say against it, if she did speak as she meant." She deigned no answer to this insinuation, but exclaimed, with some heat:

"The Spirit of God was true, and did speak as it meant and meant as it spoke: but men of corrupt minds did pervert the Scriptures . . . [which] could not be understood but by the same spirit that gave them forth."

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Then, ignoring the customary salutations, she returned to her lodgings, where she was presently gladdened by the news that

“the Deputy was so sad and melancholy, after she had been with him, that he could not go to bowls or to any other pastime.”*

An echo of this interview may be found in Oliver Cromwell's letter to his son, written in the following month. Himself so intimately acquainted with the difficulties which the young Deputy was meeting, his sympathy and advice were of rare value, and must have brought a peculiar comfort.

“WHITEHALL,

“21st April, 1656.

“HARRY,

“I have received your letters, and have also seen some from you to others; and am sufficiently satisfied of your burden, and that if the Lord be not with you, to enable you to bear it, you are in a very sad condition. . . . I think the Anabaptists are to blame in not being pleased with you. That's their fault! It will not reach you, whilst you with singleness of heart make the glory of the Lord your aim. Take heed of professing religion without the power: that will teach you to love all who are after the similitude of Christ. . . . I have to do with these poor men; and am not without my exercise. I know they are weak; because they are so peremptory in judging others. I quarrel not with them but in their seeking to supplant others; which is done by some, first by branding them with antichristianism, and then taking away their maintenance.”†

Their wholesale condemnation of their fellow-Christians was indeed the root of Oliver Cromwell's quarrel with the Quakers, and a sufficient explanation of the very limited measure of protection which they enjoyed during his term of Government.

The next notice of Barbara Blaugdone is found in a letter sent to Margaret Fell by an English preacher visit-

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 202-204.

† Carlyle's "Cromwell," vol. iv., p. 156.

ing Dublin. Writing on March 30, 1656, he speaks of his meeting with this "Freind from Bristow," and tells that as she had "drawings for Corke," he left part of the Books (*i.e.*, tracts and pamphlets on Quaker doctrine, whose distribution formed a great part of the activity of travelling Friends) "to go with her into the west."*

Barbara's visit to Cork had not been abandoned, but if she had hoped anything from her former acquaintance in that city, she was quickly undeceived. The account given by Besse's chronicler compresses a volume of disappointment and heartache into two short sentences :

"Many of her former friends grew afraid of her, speaking in so solemn and awful a manner as made them tremble. Others called her a witch, and kept out of her way, till their servants turned her out of doors."†

A phrase in the contemporary account printed by Ruttly throws light on this unkind reception. "She was moved," he says, "to follow those of her acquaintances into several steeple-houses." This was a refinement upon an always unpopular "exercise" which could hardly fail to lead to ostracism. Her friends were amongst the most respected and highly placed of the English settlers, and they would not be eager to claim an acquaintance who was "so zealous to testify the Truth in the public places for worship and concourse" which they themselves frequented. Once at least it came to their ears that she had been involved in a common brawl in the market-place, when a butcher, swinging his cleaver, swore to cleave the head of the preaching-woman. She was only saved by the bravery of a woman in the crowd, who came behind her assailant and held his arms until the soldiers arrived to relieve her. Imprisonment was Barbara's lot wherever she came, and she left Ireland at the end of a few months with but one satisfaction, that 'wherever her mouth was opened there were some that received her testimony.'‡

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 133.

† Besse, vol. ii., pp. 458, 459.

‡ Ruttly's "History," p. 109.

She returned for a while to Bristol, where she was probably a witness of the tragi-comedy of Nayler's triumphal entry into the city, on Friday, October 24, of this year, 1656.

But the spirit to which Barbara had yielded herself forbade her to rest at home. The fragment of a letter written at this time to Margaret Fell hints at an anxiety to see her, and consult with her on her work for the future. It gives a fair example of the ecstatic veneration in which the Mother of Quakerism was held by her sisters in the Church :

"I have seene, i have seene, i have seene thy beautie and tasted a little of thy power. . . . I should have come to thee long since: when thou bid me come i shall."*

On September 17 Oliver Cromwell had summoned a new Parliament to a session which was to prove of great moment to the Quaker community. It was responsible for the savage sentence passed upon Nayler; it enforced regular attendance at the national worship under a fine of two shillings and sixpence; it stiffened the laws already existing against the disturbance of public meetings; and it extended the scope of the Vagrancy Act.[†] When the new Members assembled in the Painted Chamber, the Protector addressed them upon the state of England, her domestic and foreign policy, and the steps taken towards reform, and stated in unmistakable terms his interpretation of the doctrine of liberty of conscience. But

"If a man of one form will be trampling upon the heels of another form . . . I will not suffer it in him. . . . God give us hearts and spirits to keep things equal. . . . It shall be found to be the Civil Magistrate's real endeavour to keep all professing Christians in this relation to one another: not suffering any to say or do what will justly provoke the others. I think he that would have more liberty than this, is not worthy of any."[‡]

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 155.

† Carlyle's "Cromwell," vol. iv., p. 177; and Braithwaite, p. 451.

‡ Carlyle's "Cromwell," vol. iv., p. 206.

No more tragic commentary exists upon this noble vision of Utopian England than a letter written by Barbara Blaugdone to George Fox "on the first day the Parliament sat." In that stifling summer weather, on a day so hot that Cromwell found it necessary to apologize for detaining the Members, she lay in the prison at Bristol, committed, there is little doubt, on the old charge of disturbing a minister. There, she says, she received a message, "this rose in me":

"Everyone to your tents—returne into youre own habitations, even to the light which Christ Jesus hath enlightened you withal, for as ye take counsel of the Lord, even so shal your work prosper."

Casting about in her mind for the purpose of this message, so impossible for her, a prisoner to deliver, she conceived the thought that she had been the recipient of a vision, and had heard words that were being spoken by some more favoured messenger—if not to the Parliament, then to the congregation assembled in some steeple-house. Fox would surely know if such an exhortation had been given to the assembled Parliament: "If it hath not bin done, and thou se the worke be mine, i desire a line from thee the second or first post."*

The manuscript is like a window into that dim world of prejudices and intuitions, and withal of unshakable convictions, in which the early Quakers had their being. Oliver Cromwell himself must fight in vain against such dreams as these.

The same letter contains an intimation of Barbara's desire to visit Jerusalem—a place which in these latter years of the Commonwealth proved a constant attraction to missionary Friends, though amongst all who set out from England, only one, a young man from London, succeeded in reaching his journey's end. Barbara seems to have chosen her companions for the journey, but abstained, in

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 194.

her mystical way, from breaking the project to them. When she wrote to Fox, she was still waiting until their "understanding should be opened" to recognize the unknown call "that lay on them."

One other glimpse of her life during these months spent in England is found in a letter from a travelling preacher, whom she had dissuaded from his project of visiting Ireland. The episode is one of many examples of the influence wielded, somewhat remorselessly, by the women ministers, and of the meekness with which their brethren bowed to their rebuke.

"Thomas Morford, to Margaret Fell, 1658.

"A freind came where I was, which was the third day of the weeke as I remember, and she chargd me to bee a deceiver, and that I did deceive ye people giveing me very cruell langage, telling me it was my portion. So I, knowing the dreadfull terrors of the lord, I was in great feare lest I should be a preacher to others and myselfe become a cast away: so I told Sarrah Bennet what Barborow Blagden had spoken unto me as from ye Lord. For they both are now in prison in Ireland in ye place that I was to goe to, except of late released. So S. B. did wittness it (*i.e.* Barbara Blaugdone's message) to be ye word of ye lord unto me. Then I got a frind to goe downe to the meeting that I had appointed, and I returned to my outward being againe" (*i.e.* his private house or employment—a common phrase with the Quakers), "and resolved in my mind to make mention of his name noe more."*

Poor Thomas Morford is an object for sympathy, steering as he was between Scylla and Charybdis. He signs himself "a prisoner in Bath," and thus continues his ingenuous story:

"Yet in 4 days after his word was in my bosome as fire . . . and I was forced . . . to come and bear witness against the sorceries and false prophets in this Sodomitish City of bath."

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 75.

He encloses a pamphlet,

“for which,” says he, “they cast me into prison—A warning from the lord to all frinds how you seeke for health and cure to your bodyes in the fallen nature or wisdome”—

a discouraging address, and one not to be tolerated by the promoters of a health resort.

Yet, with all his earnestness, there seems to have been some justification for Barbara's plain speaking. After good service in the Isle of Wight and Hampshire, Morford fell away, and was no more known amongst Friends.

Having hindered him in his missionary plans, Barbara may have felt the responsibility of providing a substitute. In the winter months of 1656 she took ship again, not for Jerusalem, but Ireland.

The ill-luck of her former voyage pursued her on this journey, both going and coming. The ship encountered a furious gale, and was wrecked near the shore, off Dungarvan. One man and woman were washed overboard, but with these exceptions, the Captain and all the passengers, as he supposed, reached land in the ship's boat. But the Quaker passenger still lingered below in her cabin, where the waves beat in upon her, being “ordered of the Lord to stay in the ship until they were all gone out of her.” Her action presents something of a problem to the student of religious motives in the carelessness it exhibits, not only for her own life, but for the safety of those who would attempt to rescue her. Fortunately, the mystical act of obedience stopped short of threatened tragedy.

“So when I found freedom,” so she herself expresses it, “I went and stood upon a piece of the deck that was left.” The Captain saw her from the shore, and, wading shoulder high into the sea with another man, he called to her to jump. Released now from her inhibition, she obeyed bravely enough, but as she leaped she became entangled in the ship's ropes, and a great wave receding, beat the ship and Barbara with it out again to sea. The danger, desperate as it was, was quickly past. She struggled in

towards shore on the crest of the incoming wave, and reached it by the Captain's help, without hurt to herself or her rescuers.*

Barbara Blaugdone had an incorrigible habit of addressing herself to headquarters—a habit which now and then won her a powerful friend, but more frequently brought down upon her the whole weight of outraged authority. The first place she entered on her arrival in Dublin was the Court of Justice, where she addressed herself to the judges, and exhorted them to righteousness. The immediate effect of this exhortation was her imprisonment in a horrible cell, where her only bed was a truss of straw heaped upon the ground, and exposed when it rained to a flood of filth and wet from outside. Summoned to her trial, she refused to use the form of words required for a plea of "Not guilty," though she declared, "There is no guilt upon anyone's conscience for what was done in obedience to the Lord God." This was a dangerous plea, capable of endless misapplication, and the impenitent prisoner returned again to her cell, "where she suffered much."

Sewel relates an occurrence which took place in the gaol during her confinement, which is too characteristic of seventeenth-century justice and of the influence of imprisoned Quakers upon their fellow-captives to be omitted here.

A certain man had disappeared in Dublin, and an inn-keeper, his wife, and staff of servants were lodged in the prison with Barbara Blaugdone, on suspicion of his murder. No evidence appeared against them until the brother of the missing man, impatient to succeed to his property, bribed a witness to swear that he had been murdered at the inn and buried under a wall.

Though Barbara had no suspicion of this witness's falsehood, she went to him, and showed him his sin in having concealed this knowledge for so long a time; since, if his story were true, he was as guilty as any whom he

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 205.

accused. The man was so terrified by her rebuke, that he confessed how he had been bribed to bear false witness, and was completely ignorant of all that he had sworn. Then, at Barbara's request, the Deputy sent down his priest, who heard the man's confession, exonerating all the prisoners, and he also repeated it before the judge who was to try them. At this point the missing man's brother again intervened. He visited his witness every day, and plied him with drink till he was willing to swear to his original falsehood. He also induced the gaoler, probably by the same means, to keep Barbara in close captivity, that his dupe might not repent a second time under her influence. The simple expedient of searching under the wall for the supposed corpse seems to have occurred to none of the parties concerned.

Handicapped as she now was, Barbara betook herself to writing. Not content with sending encouraging letters to the prisoners, she addressed herself to the judge, one Pepes, or Pepys, by name. She prophesied that "the day of his death drew nigh wherein he must give an account of his actions," and pointed out the terrible risk which he ran of condemning the innocent.

Her efforts were in vain. The innkeeper, with all his household, were condemned to the gallows upon the word of one self-contradicting witness. This unhappy wretch suffered with his victims as the accessory to their crime; "and," says Barbara, with a weight of misery condensed in her terse sentence, "a heavy day it was, and I bore and suffered much that day."

The sequel is almost as extraordinary as the tragedy itself. Friends with influential titles—Sir William King, Colonel Fare, and Lady Brown—came to see Barbara Blaugdone in the prison, and, offering a pleasant contrast to the behaviour of her friends in Cork, they interceded with Judge Pepys for her release. But her prophecy of his early death rankled in his mind, and he seems to have suspected that if she were free she might herself attempt

its fulfilment. Solemnly he told her friends that "he was afraid of his life." But they laughed at his alarm, and assured him that they had "known her from a child, and there was no harm in her at all." Their representations were at last successful, and Barbara was set at liberty. But she was not yet "free" to leave Dublin.

Her first act on regaining her liberty was to go to the church attended by Judge Pepys, and "clear herself of him"—a pregnant phrase. The magistrate went home to bed and died that night, probably, in modern parlance, of heart failure, the result of agitation.

One question, now fallen obsolete, was annually propounded at that period in the meetings of the Friends: "What signal Judgements have come upon Persecutors?"* This episode may shed a little light upon the frequency with which the question could be answered to the satisfaction of their victims. It was with good reason that Pepys had shrunk from releasing his Quaker captive, and the fame and dread of the prophetess was spread throughout Dublin.†

Since her last visit Quakerism had been making steady, if slow, progress in Ireland. Its history was in many respects an epitome of the history of the Mother Church. The question of tithes raged as fiercely in Ireland as in England. It had lately called forth a self-sacrificing action on the part of Edmundson, who gave up shop-keeping, in which he enjoyed an immunity from the priests' exactions, and took a farm in the County Cavan, with no other object than the encouragement of his friends in their protests against the "hireling priests."

Two hundred years before the birth of Captain Boycott the form of persecution to which he involuntarily gave his name was familiar to the suffering Quakers of Ireland. Edmundson's Journal gives the story of the doings of the priest of Mountmellick, who

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., note on p. 394.

† Sewel, vol. i., pp. 206, 207.

“endeavour’d to prevent the Miller’s grinding our corn for our families, or any to speak or trade with us or any of our families; he watched the market, and Friends’ shops: and those he saw or knew to deal with Friends, he sent the Apparitor to summon them to the Bishop’s Court. . . . This Priest told his hearers ‘That if they met any of us in the high-way, they should shun us as they would shun the Plague; and if they owed us anything, they need not pay it, and if they knock’d us on the head, the Law would bear them out.’ At which the people were mightily troubled, and in general their love declined from the Priest, and drew towards Friends: they would offer their servants to carry our corn to the mill, that we might get bread for our families, or any other kindness that they could do for us.”*

On the other hand, while imprisonment was common, and Edmundson was himself set in the stocks for preaching, the more brutal forms of punishment were unknown, and the flogging of men and women for religious crimes remained the prerogative of Old and New England.

At the time of Barbara’s second visit, Elizabeth Fletcher was also for the second time in Ireland, the last service which her failing strength allowed her. One scene, recorded by the historian Ruttly, stands out from that forgotten mission. The young girl, still only eighteen years of age, spoke in the market-place of Youghal from that text in the Prophet Joel which is so familiar to all leaders of revival: “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” Amongst her earnest listeners, one in particular, a Lieutenant in Colonel Sanders’ Foot Regiment, and an ex-Baptist, was convinced, and lived to “become a pillar” in the Irish Community. At the close of the service, an Independent teacher stood out from the crowd, and began vehemently to oppose the preaching of women. The girl preacher listened without reply, weary with the effort of addressing that great company, and conscious

* Edmundson’s Journal, printed in Ruttly’s “History of the Quakers in Ireland,” pp. 120, 121.

that she had already said all that need be said in expounding her own text. Two men, however, took up the argument on her behalf, carrying the meeting with them, and "Truth prevailed."*

Limerick, to which Barbara Blaugdone came from Dublin, had been first visited by Howgill and Burrough in the previous year. Their preaching had provoked a riot, and the two preachers had been put outside the city gates. But this effort after suppression had only enlarged their opportunity. As they were led along the streets, Burrough had preached from horseback to the crowd which followed, and a great meeting was held outside the town. After this scene, the rapid growth of Quakerism in the garrison began to alarm the Governor, and he cashiered certain Quaker soldiers, "Which action," he reported, "cured above a hundred more of that aguish distemper they were inclined to." Henceforth, while he allowed the Friends belonging to the city to meet in peace, he would admit no strange Quaker to speak to the garrison.† The Meeting was held at the house of Richard Pearce, an apothecary, whose shop had been boycotted for several months by order of the magistrates, though he was able after a time to regain his custom.

At the time of Barbara's arrival the Church was being disturbed by the ministrations of a conceited preacher, which threatened to draw away the young converts from the simplicity of their belief. Before she left Limerick, however, he had been silenced with an ease out of all proportion to the alarm which he had caused. A Friend from Waterford, hearing of his eloquence, travelled to Limerick to attend one of the meetings. But the discourse to which he listened aroused his wrath, and rising in his place, he called in a loud voice: "Serpent, be silent!" an address neatly characterized by the Irish historian as "a few words, but powerful." The unhappy preacher stammered and hesitated, and could not regain the thread

* Ruttty's "History," p. 93.

† Braithwaite, p. 219.

of his sermon. He returned to his home, and was never known to preach more, but "became foolish in the latter end of his days."*

In his earliest document on discipline, published about 1657, Fox gave the wise injunction,

"Let those who are moved to speak do it faithfully, and if anyone disapproves their words let him say so, but not in meeting."†

How necessary the caution was is shown by this lurid little scene, typical of many that were being witnessed up and down the country, not in churches alone, but in the meetings of the Friends themselves, where every man was bound in conscience to utter what "rose in him," without regard to the feelings of preacher or people.

No record has survived of Barbara Blaugdone's service of this year in Ireland beyond the catalogue of her imprisonments in Limerick, Cork, and Kinsale. At this latter place she would be encouraged in her suffering by that interesting convert, Susanna Worth, the wife of the Bishop of Killaloe, who, "though she suffered much from her husband, lived and died in unity with Friends."‡

Besse's chronicler relates that Barbara tasted the fate of Burrough and Howgill, and was banished from Ireland. Her own account is that "she took shipping for England again." But neither on this, her fourth crossing, was she to reach land without adventure.

In Fox's lyrical outburst of praise for his safe return from Virginia, he speaks of the deliverance afforded to the ship from "pirrells of . . . pyrats these Troublesome Tymes, whereof ye sea abounds." He relates in a mystical passage how he had offered up himself and his ship "now to bee taken by ye pyrats, so yt all ye ships yt are behind in Virginia and Maryland might come safe to

* Rutty's "History," p. 96.

† Printed in Barclay's "Letters of Early Friends." London, 1841.

‡ Rutty's "History," p. 96.

England.”* Barbara’s attitude when faced by this danger was not less characteristic :

“Coming towards Mineyard (Minehead) we met a pirate, who had abundance of men on board, and I began to consider whether there was any service for me to do among those rude people, but I found little to them.”

The trading vessel in which she had taken her passage seems to have accepted its fate without a struggle. The pirates boarded it, searching the passengers and carrying off their valuables. Barbara was robbed of all the property which she had with her, even of the coat upon her back. No further violence was offered to her, but the Captain, less fortunate, was carried away prisoner, till he could pay a sum of money to redeem the ship and her cargo. The vessel proceeded up the Bristol Channel, robbed of her master, and herself pledged to ransom.

So ended Barbara Blaugdone’s service in Ireland.

Eight years later, in 1666, the little Church which she had helped to establish in Cork was to pay back its debt to England by the convincement of William Penn. In 1668 the Community was set upon a regular basis by the establishment of the Provincial Meeting, and in the following year the visit of George Fox confirmed the order and discipline which had been thus inaugurated.

In generosity, in bravery under persecution, and in double diligence in the observance of Quaker practices, the Irish Friends have shown themselves to this day the worthy successors to an heroic tradition.

But long before the Church of her planting had taken firm root and braved the storms of early persecution “little Elizabeth Fletcher” was lying in her grave at Kendal, carried there eight miles from her home at Kirby Lonsdale by a great company of Friends and with great lamentations.† Four years later Edward Burrough died

* Fox’s Journal, vol. ii., p. 253.

† Thomas Camm’s account of Elizabeth Fletcher in “First Publishers of Truth,” p. 259.

of gaol fever in Newgate, at the age of twenty-eight—"a youthful summer flower," so Sewel laments him, "cut down in the winter season," to the grief of Francis Howgill, his old travelling companion, and of the whole suffering Church.* In 1669 Howgill himself died in the prison at Appleby, where he had lain for five years. Of the little band which had spread the message through Ireland in 1655, Barbara Blaugdone lived on into a lonely old age, but returned no more to watch its progress and rejoice over its victories.

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 56.

CHAPTER X

QUAKER WOMEN OF THE WEST COUNTRY

DURING the interval of Barbara Blaugdone's mission to Ireland Quakerism had been making its way into the West of England through another channel. In 1655 Fox himself had undertaken a journey into Cornwall, and was thrown into prison at Launceston, where he lay for eight months. From this confinement one may date the rapid growth of Quakerism in the south and west. Converts and sympathizers were made not only by Fox's preaching and teaching in prison, but by the constant coming and going of his visitors, who numbered some of the chief Friends, both men and women. It was not long before this fact was recognized by the authorities, who endeavoured to intercept the stream of pilgrims by laws and proclamations. Its most striking expression came from Hugh Peters, Cromwell's own chaplain, who had been sent by him to the Governor of Pendennis Castle to inquire into the circumstances and justice of Fox's imprisonment. The chaplain, being a man of penetration, sent back word to the Protector "that he could not give George Fox a better Opportunity of spreading his Principles in Cornwall than by imprisoning him there."*

Quaker pilgrims, stopped on the highway and thrown into gaols, became centres in their turn for the diffusion of Quaker influence. Of the few journeys which ended at the gaol, that undertaken by Thomas Curtis of Reading had the most far-reaching consequences. Himself a member of the wealthy merchant class, his wife Ann was

* Besse, vol. i., p. 114.

a West Country woman, the daughter of that Sheriff Yeamans of Bristol who was hanged at his own door by the Parliamentary troops at the taking of the city. This ancestry was to stand her in good stead at the Restoration, when she undertook to plead with Charles II. for Fox's release from Lancaster Castle.

Hearing of his leader's confinement in Launceston, Curtis had set out for Bodmin, to intercede on his behalf at the coming Assizes. A large farmhouse stood not far from the road, at Tregangeeves, in the parish of St. Austell, owned by a widow named Loveday Hambly. She was a zealous Churchwoman, and the friend of all the "priests" in the neighbourhood; indeed, both before and after her convincement, one can trace a striking likeness between Margaret Fell and this well-to-do Cornish woman. Curtis, in his "Testimony," relates how he was "guided" to her house, and how, at their first meeting, "she was melted with the word of life." On his return from his fruitless journey to Bodmin he called again at the farm, and this time his hostess could not be persuaded to part with him. He stayed some time at Tregangeeves, where from this day forth for twenty-six years meetings were held, and in Curtis's words, "it became a centre for Friends."

It was not to be expected that the "priests" whom Loveday Hambly had befriended would resign her to the Quakers without a struggle. "They came to the house," says Curtis, "like champions, to see if they could recover her, but she stuck to the truth." More violent measures were then tried, and a troop of soldiers was sent to the farm to arrest the Quaker preacher. His matter-of-fact relation of their change of front supplies some hint of the atmosphere of miracle which surrounded these early missionaries. The mistress of the house, not yet inured to indignity and danger, wept at the plight of her guest. But he, falling to prayer and exhortation, spoke to such purpose that "the Lieutenant and Cornet were both convinced, and the Cornet had a Meeting in his house."

About this time Dr. Thomas Lower, who was nephew to Loveday Hambly, and afterwards son-in-law to Margaret Fell, went to visit Fox at Launceston. Disappointed of his hope to relieve the prisoners with money, he asked them many questions on points of doctrine, and Fox, who was the chief spokesman, gave him satisfactory answers upon all. "Hee saide," Fox records in the Journal, "my words was as a flash of lightninge, it soe runn through him."* When he returned to Tregan-geeves with this new light, Loveday Hambly herself, with her sister, set out for Launceston, and as a result of their visits to the prison she, with her whole family, were definitely joined to the Quakers. On Fox's release from Doomsdale, he broke his journey for two or three days at Tregan-geeves, where he had "a fine large meetinge."

Only one letter has survived in the writing of Loveday Hambly—a very human document, in which she laments her inability to meet Fox at Reading in the house of her old friend Curtis, having no horse in her stable that could carry her so far, and no intention of keeping a good one, for fear of "the greedy hireling priest."† Unlike Elizabeth Hooton, whom she resembled in her outward circumstances, she never became a preacher or orator, "to express her mind," as Thomas Salthouse quaintly puts it, "by men-pleasing excellency of speech," nor, though she suffered equal loss from the priests' exactions, is any plea for justice signed by her name to be found amongst the ancient documents. But from the "Relation" published by her friends after her death in 1683 one can form a clear picture of the life of a wealthy Quaker housewife in the time of persecution.

The head of a considerable property, a great part of her time was devoted to the care of her large family of children and servants. Benjamin Coale has left a touching account of her relation with the humblest of these dependents.

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 242.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 185.

"It was my lot," he writes, "to be a household servant to her about two years, to look after her affairs, and might have been to her dying day for ought I know, if I had not been taken a Prisoner for the Testimony of Truth and kept about eight years in Prison, at which she was troubled and disappointed also: for she did manifest much love to me—yea I may say, she was more like a Mother to me than a Mistress. . . . And how tender was she and pitiful to the meanest Servant in her family if they were sick or wanted her help and assistance."

She delighted to show the boundless hospitality which is to this day the characteristic of Cornish hostesses, not only to her relatives and fellow-Quakers, but to "rich and poor, strangers and enemies." She acted as Lady Bountiful to the whole district, dispensing "Food and Physick" with a success "to which many of her Neighbours are witnesses."

From the time of her conviction meetings were held once or twice a week at her house—a course which involved the entertainment of all Friends from a distance, with the stabling of their horses; and, Curtis adds, with pleasant detail, "when a Friend came who pleased her, she sent round Invitations to both rich and Poor." Thomas Salthouse, the old steward from Swarthmoor, seems to have taken service for a time at Tregangeeves in the intervals of his preaching and imprisonments, and found there the same lavish generosity of housekeeping of which Judge Fell had half playfully complained that it would bring him to ruin.

"The Lord blest her," so Salthouse wrote in the Relation, "in her basket and store, after all her sufferings for righteousness sake, and she never wanted meat drink nor cloathing to accomodate her persecutors and their children if they were either in want of food or raiment. Her own words were often 'What's all the World? I have enough. I will never live miserable, to dye rich.'"

But she was not left in peace to lead this life of charity and well-doing. No name occurs more frequently than that of Loveday Hambly in the chronicle of "Sufferings" in Cornwall. She was exposed to the wrath of the priests, her former friends, not only through her refusal to pay tithes, but, like Margaret Fell, through holding a Quaker Meeting at her own house, and she paid heavily from time to time for these offences—in goods, in live-stock, and in imprisonment.

"This good Friend and antient widow woman," says Thomas Salthouse, "was several times cast into prison at Launceston and Bodmine for the possession and practice of her Religion, and once constrained to ride to London, which is about 220 miles from her house, to make appearance there for non-payment of tithes, etc., and at several times had her goods taken away in great quantities to the value of many hundreds of pounds, sometimes fourty head of cattle at once."

Two entries taken from Besse's "Sufferings," at an interval of more than ten years, are typical of the exactions which continued throughout that period.

"1658. Loveday Hambly was imprisoned several weeks at Bodmin for not paying Tithes of Geese and Swine, amounting but to 13/4, though she had in that and the former year suffered Distress to the value of above £45 for about £8 demanded."

In 1670, "for holding and frequenting a Meeting," her property, including a farm waggon, cattle, swine and corn, were distrained to the value of £127 10s. 6d.*

So frequent were the scenes of distraint in that pastoral neighbourhood that the live-stock from Friends' farms became at one time a glut upon the market.

"Cattle," says Besse's chronicler, writing in the black year of 1670, "is sent away usually to the Justices Grounds, till some base man or other not worth half a cow, can be got to buy the whole parcel for about half the worth."†

* Besse, vol. i., pp. 115, 119.

† *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Through all these trials Loveday Hambly, in the fine phrase of her servant Coale, "continued very valiant and cheerful." In spite of the depredations of priests and impropiators, her stock continued to flourish and her wealth to increase, and she died in December, 1682, possessed of a "competent estate." Like the Derrix sisters in Amsterdam, she left directions that the same care and help should be given to poor travelling Friends that she had bestowed upon them so ungrudgingly in her lifetime:

"That the Holy Truth might be propagated, and those that profess it might be supported by her free gift after her decease, and that friends who did travel in the Truth's service and were in want, might be supplied by those to whom she left her Outward Estate, else, said she, I should never have left it to them."

Her words as she came to die were not needed to confirm the witness of her daily life, and the evidence both of friends and enemies whom she had fed, clothed, and comforted:

"I declare . . . that I do love all the Children and Servants of the Living God with all my Heart, Soul and Strength." *

While Loveday Hambly was proving herself a "nursing mother" to Quakerism in Cornwall, another West Country convert, Katherine Evans, had been spreading the message through the highlands and islands of Great Britain. Her husband, who was a man of considerable property at Englishbatch, near Bath, joined the Quaker Church with his wife, and became, like her, a travelling preacher. Their convincement marked the end of their home-life, and though they were engaged henceforth upon the same missionary work, their journeys were never undertaken in common. This was a self-denying

* "A Relation of the Last Words and Departure of that Antient and Honourable Woman, Loveday Hambly, of Tregangeeves, in the Parish of Austell." London, 1683.

ordinance invariably observed by the married ministers, with the one much-reprobated exception of Thomas and Elizabeth Holme, and it is clear that their real affection and friendship were only strengthened in every case by their separation.

Alone or in company with her chosen companion, Sarah Chevers, Katherine travelled up and down through England, Scotland, and Ireland. Twice in one year she suffered in Salisbury, being beaten at the market-cross, and on her return confined in Bridewell.

"They put her into a Blind-House," so the diarist Whiting records in one breathless sentence, "a filthy nasty Place, where two Mad Men had lately died, and no Friends to come at her, and to have nothing to Eat but what she earned in a Blind-House (see their Cruelty who would have her work and yet would not allow her light to work by) taking Counsel again to whip her, had not one Col. Wheat told the Mayor, They might as well have whip'd the Woman of Samaria, who brought the Glad Tidings of Christ into the Town: and after consulting with the High-Priest John Strickland, touching her Enlargement, they would have had Alice Helliard a Friend, to engage that she should not come again through the City, though it was the direct Way to her outward Being, the Priest alledging, That it was contrary to Rule, for if she was persecuted in one City, she should flee to another: (See the Use as well as Trade the Priests make of the Scriptures to turn People out of the Way)."

Such were the effects upon preacher and audience of an open-air service held under a Puritan Government in the market-place of a cathedral city.

In 1657 Katherine was banished, under martial law, from the Isle of Wight, and in the Isle of Man

"there was a Soldier came to her Bed-side with a Naked Sword, and took her by the Arm, and haled her out of Bed, at the Tenth Hour of the Night, and carry'd her on Ship-board to send her away." *

* "Persecution Expos'd," by John Whiting, p. 220. London, 1715.

In 1658, the same year in which Mary Fisher, under Perrot's guidance, set out for Adrianople, Katherine Evans and Sarah Chevers took ship for Alexandria. Their voyage ended at Malta, a visit unpremeditated on their part, and due to a sudden decision of the Captain, thus providing one more instance of the difficulties which beset the missionary Quaker in reaching his journey's end. Fifty pages are devoted by Sewel to an account of the subsequent imprisonment of both women under the Inquisition, and the story has been frequently re-told. Through three and a half years the Grand Inquisitor and his friars tried every art of argument—bribery, solitary confinement, and threats of burning—to turn the two simple Quaker women from their faith, and would have been glad in the end to be rid of their perplexing visitors on their bond, which they consistently withheld, not to return to the island. In this case one may acquit the Inquisition of deliberate cruelty or the lust of persecution; one may detect rather a puzzled curiosity mingled with respect for the dauntless foreigners. The women on their part used every ingenuity to display their horror of the idolatry which they witnessed around them. Their ignorance of any language but their own added a touch of mystery to Katherine's prayers offered in a loud voice with her back to the altar, and to their trembling and tears, which continued for three-quarters of an hour in the midst of the congregation. The story of these three and a half years lacks no detail of Quaker heroism—from the hunger-strike of three days and nights performed by both women seated upon the bare ground in winter, to the offer of Daniel Baker, a missionary Friend, to "lie body for body," or to give his own life for the release of the prisoners.

Meantime there is ample evidence in the old manuscripts of the anxiety with which Friends in Somerset and throughout England were following the news of their fortunes, which reached them now and then through

letters conveyed by English ships. Fox, being on a visit to London, made strenuous efforts at Court to obtain their liberty. Gilbert Latey, the ex-Court tailor tells, how he

“discovered after much pains that one Lord Obaney, who came over with the Queen Mother and was Lord Almoner to her, had both Interest, Power and Command in the Isle of Malta.”

This was that Lord D'Aubigny, mentioned with respect by Evelyn; he was a Roman Catholic, and brother to the Duke of Lennox and Richmond. In his account of their interview Latey shows himself pathetically grateful for the courtesy and good humour with which his application was received,

“at a time when the Lord's people were looked upon by many as Speckled Birds, and went as with their Lives in their Hands. He did not think Friends mad, as many did.”

Lord D'Aubigny's letters to Malta quickly took effect, and the women were released unconditionally, with the good wishes of Inquisitors and gaolers. Their departure partook of the nature of a triumph. A passage was given them on “one of the King of England's frigates, called the *Saphire*.” They had for companions several of the Knights of Malta, including the brother of the Grand Inquisitor, who, by courteous speeches and recommendations to the Captain, did all in his power to lighten the tedium of the voyage, assuring them that if they should return to Malta, they would be safe from further persecution. So strong, indeed, was the impression made upon him by their constancy and religious fervour that he remarked to the Captain: “If they go to heaven one way, and we another, yet we shall all meet together at last”—a revolutionary speech, indeed, from the Grand Inquisitor's brother! It was characteristic that the Quaker women on their side would admit of no such compromise: “They

told him that Christ Jesus, the Light of the World, was the only Way to the Father."*

It is pleasant to find that on their arrival in London they went to see Gilbert Latey, who had petitioned for their release, and, at their request, he introduced them to Lord D'Aubigny, who had obtained it. They told him, says Latey,

"Were it in their Power, they should be as ready in all Love to serve him. Upon which he reply'd, Good Women, for what Service or Kindness I have done you, all that I shall desire of you is That when you pray to God, you will remember me in your prayers."†

Katherine Evans had left England during the interregnum which followed the death of Cromwell. She returned to find Charles II. on the throne, the Quaker Act in force, and her husband, from whom she had been so long separated, a frequent prisoner for preaching. Nothing daunted by his example, by their own past suffering, or present danger, she and Sarah Chevers undertook a missionary tour through Scotland and Ireland. During his wife's absence, in January, 1664, John Evans died in prison. It was not until two months later that she landed with her companion at Minehead. They were arrested on their way through Somerset for attending an unlawful meeting, and bandied about for several months from prison to prison and from Sessions to Quarter Sessions. When release came at last Sarah Chevers did not live long to enjoy it, though Katherine continued for nearly thirty years to preach and to travel.

The memory of the early Friends is kept green by their sufferings alone, and the next seventeen years of her life, with the exception of one imprisonment in Wales "for not swearing," seem to have been lived in peace and passed without record. In 1681 during the Bristol perse-

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 538-588.

† "Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of Gilbert Latey," pp. 49-56. London, 1707.

cution, her name emerges from the silence, with that of Barbara Blaugdone, and of every adult member of the Bristol Meeting.

John Whiting, in his contemporary history of Quakerism in the West, relates that there were three great persecutions in Bristol: the first at its beginning, in 1654 and 1655; the second, ten years later, after the passing of the Act of Banishment, at which time also Barbara Blaugdone had been thrown into prison; and the third, in 1681, which, as he remarks in his picturesque way: "like the third blast of wind or wave of the sea, was the most violent of all."* The excuse given for this persecution showed considerable ingenuity in its contrivers. The owners of the Meeting-House were, it appears, under the obligation of sending a man-at-arms to the city trained bands, and a fine of £5 was alleged to be imposed upon them for their failure to comply with this requirement. A mob entered the Meeting-House at the "Fryars," ostensibly to collect the fine or to do damage to the amount stated. They wrecked the forms, windows, and galleries, burning or carrying away the fittings, and looted the apartment of the caretaker, a widow, who lived in the flat above. The wheel had come full circle since the Puritan army had stabled their horses in the Parish Church, and wrecked the altars and windows of Minster and chapter-house.

This riot gave the signal for an organized persecution, by fine, imprisonment, and every form of outrage. In February, 1681, Barbara Blaugdone reappears in Besse's chronicle of "Sufferings"—"sent from the Meeting in the morning to Bridewell, as were also twelve others for continuing their Meeting in the street."† One of her companions was Katherine Evans, then on a visit to Bristol, who had met with no such abuse from the Inquisition as now fell to her lot under the English law.

Whiting draws a painful picture of the committing of Quakers,

* Whiting, p. 59 *et seq.*

† Besse, vol. i., p. 56.

"and crouding them in prison, beating them with staves, and abusing Friends at their meetings very much . . . throwing down antient Men and Women in the Streets, like to spoil them."

About this time, unfortunately for the Quakers, Sheriff Knight, their old enemy, who had wept for joy at the passing of the Act of Banishment,

"was knighted for his Services, and was so imperious afterwards both at Meetings, and in the Prison, that there was no doing with him and his Accomplices, who vaunted and boasted much of his Encouragement."

Meanwhile, as Besse's chronicler records,

"The Men and Women being generally in Prison, the Children kept up their Meetings regularly, and with a remarkable Gravity and Composure."

Although the law forbade the imprisonment of Non-conformists under sixteen years of age, the Bristol persecutors, like the London magistrates before them, found means of evading a too-merciful provision. They raided the children's meetings, dispersing and beating the congregation, which on one occasion numbered fifty-five boys and girls. Thirteen boys present at that time were set in the stocks, eight wearing the "cruel garters" for two and a half hours. Growing more bold, the chief persecutor, Helliard, sent eleven boys and four girls to Bridewell. One may read in Besse's "Sufferings" how,

"a Friend engaged for their Appearance next day before the Deputy-Mayor, who endeavoured both by Persuasions and Threats to make them promise to come at no more Meetings; but the Children in that Respect were unmoveable; Wherefore they were sent to Bridewell again, Helliard, to terrify them, charging the Keeper to provide a new Cat-of-Ninetails against next Morning. Next day at the Tolzey he urged the Justices to have them corrected, but could not prevail. The Boys and Girls were mostly from ten to twelve years of Age." *

* Besse, vol. i., p. 66.

This proud record is not confined to the Quaker children of Bristol. We have the word of Thomas Curtis that at Reading, in 1664, "our little children," though pulled out of meeting and beaten, "kept the meetings up when we were all in prison."* There can have been small need in those early days to warn young people against pastimes and the spirit of levity.

The majority of the Quaker prisoners came up for trial at the Sessions of 1682, and were fined many times over for various offences, but principally for breach of the peace, the name given, surely in sarcasm, to their silent meetings. One hundred and sixty still remained in prison, cooped up so closely in the summer weather that many were carried out sick, and some died, for want of air and room.

Barbara Blaugdone, however, by some strange chance, passed this year alone in the Women's Ward at Newgate. She must have been released with Katherine Evans amongst the fortunate few who escaped at the Sessions. Whiting, the diarist, mentions a visit paid to him and his fellow-prisoners at "Ivelchester" by Katherine Evans in 1683. In the same year Barbara Blaugdone was present at a memorable meeting held in Chew Magna, a village three or four miles out of Bristol. The priest of the place, an old persecutor named Cross, had long suffered from the attentions of one of his parishioners—a Quaker woman, "who had a Publick Testimony"—significant expression. On this September day he had secretly invited Helliard, the Under-Sheriff of the county, who was responsible for the worst barbarities of the Bristol persecution, to come over to Chew Magna. His congenial task was to break up the Friends' meeting, and afterwards celebrate the occasion with a dinner at the Vicarage.

The meeting had begun when Helliard arrived, according to programme, with a company of bailiffs—an ill-omened and familiar figure to Barbara Blaugdone and her two

* Quoted in "Letters of Early Friends," p. 240. London, 1841.

women friends from Bristol. The scene which followed had the same shameful familiarity. Weary at last of beating and abusing, Helliard retired to the priest's house to dinner, leaving his prisoners in charge of the bailiffs. Mr. Cross welcomed him from his labour with uncovered head, exclaiming with a quaint exactness of calculation that he himself would live four years the longer for it. This prophecy, as Friends could not fail to remark, came far short of fulfilment, and once more a "signal judgment" fell upon the persecutor. Before the prisoners had been conveyed to Bristol, the priest fell to the ground in a swoon. He never recovered consciousness, but died soon afterwards.

After the meal, Helliard returned with fresh vigour to his task. He attempted to set fire to the Meeting-House—a rough and ready execution of justice which was frustrated by the neighbours, out of fear for their own dwellings. More incensed by this check, he burst in among the prisoners, pulling them to the ground, and making a bonfire of the forms on which they had sat. He then wrote out a mittimus for the whole company of twenty-seven, thirteen of whom were women. But at this point, the old Barbara Blaugdone, with her two friends from Bristol, and a few others who were known to the officers, were allowed to drop out, and only sixteen, one of whom died before long of ill-usage, were committed to prison or Sessions.*

Bodily suffering was but a part of the persecution which Friends were called upon to endure. In this year of 1683 the fines levied upon Quakers in Bristol amounted to £16,660—apportioned amongst 191 debtors, at the rate of £20 a month.† Barbara Blaugdone bore her full share of these exactions, being fined £60 at this time for three months' absence from national worship, a period which incidentally decides the date of her release from prison.

In 1686, in spite of King James's Proclamation, many Friends still lingered in the Bristol prisons for their

* Whiting, pp. 86-88.

† *Ibid.*, p. 95.

refusal to take the oath. Barbara wrote to the King, informing him of their imprisonment, while assuring him of her confidence that their sufferings were not imposed by his order. On September 13 she enclosed this address in a letter to George Fox, asking him to read it, and deliver it to King James, if he thought well. The closing sentences of this covering letter are extremely characteristic, and gain additional interest from the fact that they are the last words of Barbara Blaugdone which have come down to us. Richard Marsh, to whom she refers with such bitterness, had been one of the chief sufferers, with his sick wife, both in money and goods, during the great persecution in Bristol in 1681. Now, it seems, he had married again, either "in the world"—*i.e.*, outside the Quaker Community—or "by a priest," and so brought scandal upon Friends. Barbara's rebuke has lost nothing in energy since the day, now thirty years ago, when she dissuaded Thomas Morford from his missionary ambitions, while her last phrase seems to indicate that even now, at the age of seventy-eight, she was still working and preaching.

"I believe thee heard how Richard Marsh manifested his folly and wickednes in taking his wife contrary to the order of frinds. It was very gros. A rich freind told me he would doe more good than ever i would doe, but he lide the more."

Whiting records the death of Katherine Evans, who "lived to a great Age, notwithstanding all her great Travels and Sufferings, and at last died in Peace about the fourth Month, 1692."

Barbara Blaugdone survived her old prison companion by more than twelve years. The fact of her death is briefly noticed in the Friends' Registers.

"She died of age in the Parish of St. John Zachary (so called) in the City of London, 29.9.1704. aged 95 years."

Half of this long life had been spent in the Quaker service, in perils of shipwreck, robbers, flogging, imprison-

ments, and loss of goods. None of these things had been able to shorten its term, nor break her unconquerable spirit. She was perhaps the typical public woman of the hostile critic. The apostle of destruction rather than edification, she moves through these old chronicles like an avenging spirit, discouraging the weak believer "with very cruel language," casting a gloom upon mirth and friendship, and terrifying her judges with the spectre of sudden death.

Loneliness and unpopularity were the price of her independence. Less fortunate than Elizabeth Hooton, she left no son to gather up his mother's "papers," and preserve the details of her ministry. No circle of sorrowing friends embalmed her memory in a Book of Testimonies—a tribute paid to Margaret Fell, Loveday Hambly, and many another prominent woman. She was herself her own biographer, and her account alone provided the material used by Sewel in his later history.

But she died in the consciousness of a good day's work bravely accomplished, and secure in the approval of a conscience unwarped by cowardice and unstained by compromise with evil. "The Lord God Himself was with her, and did direct her."

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST QUAKER WOMEN IN HOLLAND

A DUTCH play, or *Blyspel*, called "De Geveinsde Kwaker," which was printed in 1708, is preserved in the British Museum, and is of singular value to the student of Quakerism in Holland. The author introduces his comedy with the statement that it had been several times performed in Amsterdam, and twenty years previously, in 1688, had had four most successful runs at a new theatre. This fact in itself sheds a borrowed interest upon the piece, as a sign of public familiarity with Quaker manners, and of the curiosity aroused by them, in a country where no Quaker is now known to exist.

Burlesque though it is, the play proves on examination to be a fairly accurate mirror of a section of Dutch Quakerism. Dyrk Holpel, the villain, from whom it takes its title, is a Netherlandish Tartuffe, and had many prototypes amongst "the strange and odd people, not sincere in heart," who flocked to the first Friends' meetings in Amsterdam. His final unmasking is also foreshadowed in the true history, which relates how the intruders "perceived in time that they were not regarded" by the genuine Quakers, whose leaders, indeed, took occasion to contradict them, and at length, "after many exorbitances," they carried their pretensions elsewhere.*

Tryntje, the woman preacher, who, in her tub-pulpit, decorates the frontispiece of the volume, makes, as one would expect, an unfortunate appearance in her scene at

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 309.

the *Vergadering*. Her plea for the better treatment of wives is set at nought by the villain with a list, three lines long, of misogynist Greek philosophers. It is noticeable that a third speaker in the meeting also takes his text from a reputed saying of Aristotle.

This parade of learning would have been grotesquely beside the mark in a satire upon the English Friends. But the Society in Holland grew up under the protection of that spiritual blue-stocking and philosopher, the Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia. Its chief preacher was Judith Zinspinning, a woman of acknowledged ability and great attainments, and it produced, in the second generation, William Sewel, the "lexicographer," and the historian of Quakerism.

It was natural that the Quaker message should find an entrance into Holland which was denied it in the other countries of Europe. Since the year 1593, when the Brownists fled to Leyden to escape Queen Elizabeth's Act against Nonconformists, the country had been the refuge of all persecuted foreign sects.* During those years the long struggle between the Dutch Calvinists and Remonstrants had culminated, in 1619, in the execution of Barneveldt and the flight of Grotius, which led to the emigration of great numbers of their followers. It is strange to find that the place of these exiles was constantly supplied by refugees from England, and that the Pilgrim Fathers themselves looked to Holland as the halfway-house toward religious liberty.

Amsterdam in particular was a hotbed of strange doctrines, and was visited in 1641 by Evelyn,

"chiefly," as he says, "for the purpose of conversing with the sectaries that swarmed in this city, out of whose spawn came those almost innumerable broods in England afterwards."†

* "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," by Robert Barclay, p. 63. London, 1876.

† Evelyn's Diary, p. 16.

Once the difficulties of the language had been overcome, the problems of the Quaker missionary in Amsterdam differed little from those which were being encountered in the same years by the pioneers in London, that priest and prophet ridden city.

Beside their common attachment to Protestantism, Holland and England were associates in commerce, and rivals in maritime enterprise. Here and there colonies of Dutchmen had settled in England for the purposes of trade, enjoying, like the baize-makers of Colchester, their own church and their own pastor. It was probably the services held by William Caton amongst the Dutch people in their own "steeple-house" at Sandwich which first turned the young preacher's thoughts to a mission in Holland.*

In addition to these voluntary settlers, the Dutch War, which followed the Navigation Act of 1651, filled the gaols of England with prisoners taken in the sea-fights. In 1652 Mary Fisher shared the confinement of the Castle Garth at York with "60 or more Dutchmen," an experience which probably fell to the lot of many of her fellow-believers.†

During the years 1655 and 1656 at least three attempts were made, one of them by a woman, to carry the Quaker message into Holland. True to their reputation, the Dutch people flocked to the meetings of the pioneers, but they were impervious to rebuke, and showed themselves more eager to give than to receive instruction. It was not until 1657, when Ames and Stubbs were joined by Caton in Amsterdam, that the first orthodox members were attracted to the Quaker Church.‡

The three preachers who were now to leave their mark upon the religious history of Holland had, at first sight,

* "Steven Crisp and his Correspondents, 1657-1692" (Introduction by C. Fell Smith, p. xvi. 1892). And Sewel, vol. i., p. 192.

† Letter from T. Aldam to M. Fell (Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 42).

‡ Sewel, vol. i., p. 309.

little in common, either in their influence, their methods of work, or their past history; but they had already laboured and suffered in company, and a close bond of friendship existed between them. Ames was a typical first-fruits of the mission of Burrough and Howgill to Ireland—a soldier, first of the King and then of the Parliament, and withal a Baptist teacher of the strictest sort.* Stubbs, who was also an ex-soldier, was one of the few Quaker missionaries whose acquaintance with languages went beyond his mother-tongue.† He had a good knowledge both of dead and Oriental languages, and travelled not only in Holland, but in Italy and in the “Dominions of the Grand Turk” himself. William Caton, who was born in 1637, was still little more than a boy. He had been brought up at Swarthmoor as a companion to Judge Fell’s son, and was convinced with Margaret Fell at the time of Fox’s memorable visit. While Ames, in the intervals of his work in Holland, returned to Ireland, the country of his adoption, Caton found a welcome always awaiting him at his old home in Lancashire. His intimate and loving letters to its mistress provide a running commentary to Sewel’s history of the work in Holland, and give a welcome glimpse of the softer side of Margaret Fell’s character. He sends her at one time “one of the largest maps to be procured,” that she might be able to follow his travels, inclosing a seal for her letters, and some trifling presents for the children that they could not buy at home. For, as he wrote to her in 1656,

“I find that I am not in any measure blotted out of thy remembrance, but that thou art as ready to nourish the tender plant after it be removed out of the nursery as well as in it.”‡

On Ames’ return to Amsterdam in 1657 he was met for the first time by persecution—always a happy augury for the success of the Quaker message. 1656 had been the

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 147.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 202.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 314.

year of Nayler's trial and punishment for blasphemy—the theme of protracted debate in the English Parliament, and a matter of national concern. A hostile version of the affair had made its way into Holland, and Ames and his companion found their work forestalled and discredited by the circulation of lying pamphlets, and by a scurrilous book printed in Amsterdam itself.* When the magistrates summoned the newly arrived Quakers before them, their conscientious rudeness appeared to bear out these printed accusations. But they ignored the subsequent order to leave the town, and finally, after an imprisonment of some days, they were conducted at night outside the city boundaries. True to Quaker tradition, Ames returned next day, and showed himself openly in the great market; but the authorities, satisfied with one demonstration of disapproval, took no further notice of his presence.

While the effects of Nayler's heresy were apparent in the rigour of the magistrates, they had communicated themselves more subtly into the heart of the infant Church. Ames found his work in Amsterdam discounted by the opposition of a woman preacher named Ann Gargill, one of the dreaded sect of Ranters, traitors within the camp, who were more dangerous to Quakerism than the bitterest of its avowed enemies. Ann had travelled as a missionary into Portugal in 1655, but returned to London in the thick of the Nayler agitation. Following the evil example of Nayler's women friends, she is said to have fallen at Fox's feet and worshipped him.† Then, fleeing from his displeasure, she had carried her pernicious teaching into Holland. When Ames sent a report of his work in Amsterdam to Margaret Fell (17th April, 1657), he had to confess—

“When I came thear I found much confusion, for Ann Gargill had been thear som weekes and had carryed her selfe soe that shee in measure had murdered the good

* Sewel, vol. i., pp. 308-310.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 326, and note on p. 468.

desires towards God and did labour utterly toe destroy and toe scatter, had not the Lord prevented it. . . . By me shee was denyed, which was noe small joy toe the simpel hearted."*

In this difficult work he was helped by Caton, who put a summary period to Ann's hostilities by requesting an English seaman to carry her out of the meeting which she was interrupting. He cut at the root of the current slanders by printing a number of pamphlets in defence of the Quakers. His own book—the "Moderate Enquirer Resolved"—was composed in Latin and English, and translated into Dutch by another hand, Caton not being as yet a master of the language. Its curious title is perhaps an indication of the value which the English missionaries to Amsterdam had learnt to put upon "moderation"—even in the conduct of the seeker after righteousness.

It was probably during the lull which followed the ejection of Ann Gargill, and as a result of Caton's publications, that the first "orthodox" Quakers were joined to the Society. These were Jacob Williamson Sewel and Judith Zinspinning, his wife, the parents of the future historian of Quakerism.

This couple offer a striking example of the medley of creeds and nationalities which made up the Amsterdam of that day. A free citizen and surgeon of the city, Sewel was the son of an Englishman, a native of Kidderminster, who had joined the Brownists, and fled to Holland to escape persecution. There he had married a Dutch wife, and settled at Utrecht. Judith Sewel had a still more remarkable family history. Her father, Conrad Zinspinning, was born in Cologne of Roman Catholic parents. He was destined by them to become a monk, but his father's death occurring before he had taken the final vows, he was set free from the cloister. He then learnt a trade, and spent his *Wanderjahre* in Holland, France, and

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 28.

Italy, finding free lodging as a lay friar in the monasteries to which he came in his travels. Arriving at Amsterdam, he took up work as a journeyman, living at the house of his master, who was a Baptist.

Here for the first time he met with the New Testament, and his reading, backed by his master's discourses, won him to the Reformed Religion. He joined the Baptist Church, and settled in Amsterdam, taking for his wife the daughter of a Primitive Baptist, a religious refugee from Flanders.

From the first their daughter Judith showed an inclination to that life of religious celibacy from which her father had so gladly escaped. She was one of the infant prodigies of piety which not uncommonly sprang up in that atmosphere of overstrained religious feeling. Her father, with a twinge of conscience over his own lost vocation, was often heard to regret that she had not been born a boy, to "become an eminent instrument in the Church." Ignorant as yet of the Quakers, and the career which their ministry opened to women, Judith was married, somewhat against her inclination, to Jacob Williamson Sewel.

But the young couple were suited to each other in their religious aims and ideals, and both were profoundly dissatisfied with the teaching which they received in their own places of worship. As the years went on, Judith entered upon that phase of experience which would have earned her in England the wistful title of Seeker. At odds with herself and with all the world, she was inclined to blame the married state for her unhappiness, and to believe that leisure for thought and freedom from household cares would bring her the peace which she longed for. One day, however, as she was crying aloud from the depths of misery and darkness, the revelation came to her as it had come to Fox: "That if she would be perfect, she must follow the light in every respect." Upon this she withdrew, like him, from intercourse with her fellows, and "went no more to church."

It was at this stage in her religious development that she and her husband first came into contact with the Quaker missionaries. Judith recognized at once the truth of their message, but it was only after a long and painful struggle that she was able to accept it. She was impressed by the strange likeness between the revelation which she had herself received and the doctrine of the Inward Light which was preached by Ames and Caton, while her dissatisfaction with the sermons of the Baptist ministers was explained and sanctioned by their showing of their light of Christ as the only true teacher. But she was a woman whose piety and knowledge had been admired by the whole of religious Amsterdam. It was no small sacrifice to yield herself to this Divine guidance, and rely no longer upon her own intellect and attainments. On the other hand, her conscience reproached her for her former self-sufficiency, and the defectiveness of any service she had hitherto attempted.

Meantime her husband, whom, according to Sewel, "she much exceeded in clearness of understanding," was perplexed by no such obstinate questionings. He flung himself with zest and at once into the observance of the petty details required by his new profession of faith, and seems to have felt, and to have enforced his contention by argument, that conformity to the Quaker standards of salutation and dress would resolve his wife's doubts of her spiritual purity.

This hint of imperfect sympathy may explain more fully than her son, who reports it, could realize, the restiveness which Judith felt under the yoke of marriage. Be that as it may, it was not until her husband's death that she found full scope for her natural abilities. Still a young woman, she was left a widow with one boy. According to Caton,* she sent this son William to live with his uncle, while she stepped at once into the position of public authority and influence for which her talents designed her. Indeed, so

* Steven Crisp : Colchester Collection, No. 138.

far as one can infer from these old chronicles, the duties of a woman preacher were not compatible with the duties of a wife and mother. Either the children were left to the care of others, as in the case of Stubbs and his wife, whose grateful letters to Margaret Fell are evidence of her care for their deserted family;* or, as in the case of Judith Zinspinning, the buried talent and the stifled ambition revenged themselves in moods of discontent and morbid introspection. Perhaps Mary Fisher found the happiest solution to the problem when she spent the first twelve years of her life as a Quaker in preaching and travelling, and, upon her marriage, retired to make a home for her husband and the children who were born to them, henceforth confining her religious activities within the Women's Meeting of her own city.

Judith Zinspinning soon became known throughout Holland as a preacher and author of great force and influence. Her first act on joining the Quakers was to write, like Elizabeth Hooton, to the Church which she had left: "A Serious Reproof of the Flemish Baptists." She followed this by addresses not only to the Quaker meetings, but to the Assembly of the "Collegianten," a Dutch sect, which strikingly resembled the Friends, both in their tenets and in the conduct of their meetings. They differed, however, in not admitting women to the ranks of their unpaid preachers, and they paid a singular compliment to Judith in allowing her to address them. As her fame grew she began to travel up and down between the towns of Holland, being invited from considerable distances to speak at the Quaker gatherings. Not only so, but the strange sect of the "Fifth Monarchy Men" overwhelmed her with flattery on account of her "pathetical admonitions." It is evident that her intelligent and cultured preaching was, in great part, responsible for settling the Quaker Church upon a secure basis.†

In 1659, two years after Quakerism had taken root in

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 93.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 178.

Amsterdam, it already numbered many steady and faithful members, the test of whose sincerity was their behaviour under persecution. Caton, returning in this year, found the city authorities still neutral, but either unable or unwilling to restrain the mob which nightly attacked the Meeting-House. The enemies of the new sect had adopted the tactics which were so successful in England, and fomented the disturbances, in the hope that the discredit of provoking a riot might fall upon the Quakers. Caton himself narrowly escaped with his life from an attack thus made upon him at one of his services. To prevent the recurrence of the danger, he advised the Friends to vary their place of meeting, and thus evade the attentions of the rabble.*

Although Ames gained the remarkable testimony from William Sewel, that

“he was condescending in indifferent matters, thinking that there were customs, which though not followed in one country were yet tolerable in another,”

the old system of provocation and reprisal was slowly making its way into Amsterdam. In 1660 Caton told Margaret Fell that “the bretheren have for sundry years suffered the spoyleing of their goods.” A few months later he was greatly troubled by the indiscretion of a Friend from home, who was disturbing the “steeple-houses” (*domus acuminatae*, or *Gespitzte Huyzen*, to give Fox’s phrase its Continental dress). Pecuniary loss and irresponsible rioting were small evils to Caton, who had had a taste of the English lash and the English prison. He feared that the visitor’s conduct would at last enrage the inhabitants, and break the immemorial tradition of Amsterdam as a refuge in time of persecution.†

Caton appears to have made his home at this time with a family of sisters, who were henceforth to take up a great place in his life and thoughts. Married or single, they were all known, after the Dutch custom, by their maiden

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 370.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 276 (?).

name of Derrix. Annekin, the eldest, with her sister Niesie, was the head of a large mercantile business, and did a great trade, both in Amsterdam and the outlying country. The education of Dutch women, according to a contemporary woman writer, much surpassed that of the English, and their knowledge of arithmetic enabled them to understand business "with as much Dexterity and Exactness as their or our Men can do."* The story of these two business women of Amsterdam, as told in Caton's letters, is an interesting confirmation of this statement.

After their convincement Niesie and Annekin Derrix, being well-to-do women, began to keep open house to all Quakers travelling into Holland or Germany, and the letters addressed to these missionaries were received and forwarded by them. They opened a depot for Quaker literature, and despatched it, according to Caton's list, to "Gilderland, Highduchland or Germany, France, Freezland, Zeeland, and Hamburg."

Two other sisters were living in the city—who both became known as Quaker preachers—one, a widow, and the other, Gertrude, unhappily married to a certain Herr van Loosefelt, a Friend of doubtful loyalty. She was not, however, so "bowed down with burdens," to use Caton's sympathetic phrase, but that she could undertake a visit to the Princess Elizabeth at Heidelberg in 1666, and again in the following year at Herford, and gain from the noble lady an affectionate remembrance as "dear Gertrude."

It was at the house of the Loosefelts that William Penn stayed on his official visit to the Dutch Society in 1667, when a lasting friendship was formed between himself and Gertrude. She ended her long life in England as the wife of Steven Crisp, of Colchester, Caton's successor in the care of the Church in Holland, who had been for many years her confidant and comforter.†

It was in the beginning of 1661 that the campaign of

* "Essay in Defence of the Female Sex," by Mary Astell, p. 17. 1696.

† "Steven Crisp and his Correspondents"; and Sewel, vol. ii., p. 402.

suppression was seriously inaugurated against the Quakers, the brunt of it falling upon the Derrix sisters, who had hitherto carried on their activities without interference from the magistrates. Towards the end of the previous year the Friends of Amsterdam had issued a "Declaration," which was printed to the number of some hundreds, and sent to the Derrix's for distribution. It was probably an echo of the manifesto written by Fox to defend his followers against the charge of complicity in the Fifth Monarchy Rising. Its supposed political character was regarded with suspicion by the magistrates of Amsterdam. Their prejudice was strengthened by its piratical republication by an enemy, with many "malicious lies upon the back." Caton, however, drew some comfort from this untoward circumstance in the reflection that, whether by friend or enemy, the "Declaration" was thus "the more spread abroad," whereas "the lies were already old, and could not do much more mischief."

Unfortunately, however, Niesie Derrix, to whom the original "Declaration" had been committed, was summoned before the "Opperschout," and subjected to a close examination. Finding that she had already disposed of many copies, he was, as Caton reports, "in a mighty rage," and called the publication, which he had never seen, "Un schandelycke Pasquill—that is, a shamefull or scandalous Libell." An officer was sent to search the house, where some hundreds of copies were awaiting despatch to Hamburg, and not only the suspected "Declaration," but all Quaker books found on the premises were confiscated. Niesie was ordered to pay a fine of about £3 sterling. Caton concludes his account with the exclamation that he had never known the like in Holland before, much less in Amsterdam.*

But the imposition of a fine was only the beginning of troubles for a loyal Quaker. Niesie Derrix, in Caton's ominous phrase, "had no freedom to pay it." His

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 274.

account of the distraining of goods to the amount owing is written with such obvious feeling and so keen an eye for detail that it may be quoted in full :

“ Upon the fourth day of the weeke the officers came to straine, there being three officers, two portters and A smith, the like had not happened before among our friendes in this city. Soe when they had bene A time below, in the shop—(they Refussed to take either Butter or Cheese, for they said that was goods which the mice and Katts would eate) they went above, and viewing the goods there they were not satisfied with what there eyes beheld, but they must have A Certaine Cobbert opened, where the mony was, which ye Smith did open According to order.

“ But in the meane time ffriends had spoke notably to them, and they were brought to so much moderation, as that they would willingly see one of ye Declarations, which was procured. And the cheife Officer read ye same, whereby, together with something else, hee was so smitten, that when they had taken the money out of ye Cubbard he was scarce in A Capacitie to count it, he was so exceedingly troubled, and his eyes so filled with teares, (as I have bene informed) saying he never did ye like in his life, etc. And when he had taken out the summ (which was 3 lb, besides the Officers fees, he to witt the chiefe officer) with A troubled mind for what he had done, withdrew in quietnesse outwardly, as with care of making any disturbance.”*

Meanwhile Ames, who had travelled into Germany, had gained a powerful ally to the Quaker cause in the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the “ Winter-King ” of Bohemia. This grand-daughter of James I. was to be, in after years, the hostess and correspondent of William Penn, and the friend of Gertrude Derrix. Her home, in 1658, was with her brother, Karl Ludwig, the Prince Elector of Heidelberg, who, like herself, was attracted to the Quakers; indeed, as Ames naïvely remarked in one of his letters, “ I finde that the man loves me.”†

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 275; and Besse, vol. ii., p. 455.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 195.

Princess Elizabeth had her full share of the romantic interest which was inseparable from every branch of the Stuart family, until its final extinction in the alliance of Elizabeth's sister Sophia with the House of Hanover. She is reported by this sister to have known every language and science under the sun, and her taste for philosophy was fostered by a correspondence with Descartes. She had, indeed, two ruling passions, the love of learning and the love of the Protestant religion—both of which she may have derived from her maternal grandfather. But her studies met with little encouragement in the Court of her exiled mother at The Hague. She passed her early and middle life a stranger to sympathy, in irksome dependence upon her relatives. At last, in 1667, nearly ten years after her first meeting with the Quakers, she was appointed Protestant Abbess of Herford, or Herwerden, in Westphalia. Now, when nearly fifty years of age, she was advanced to a position of honour, independence, and responsibility. She enjoyed political dignity as a member of the German Empire, being entitled to send a Deputy to the Diet, and to furnish one horse and six footmen to the Imperial forces. Like an abbess of the early Middle Ages, she presided in the court of justice on one day in every week, and held sway over the Imperial town of Herford, with its 7,000 inhabitants, as well as over the adjacent villages.

But this sudden elevation failed to dazzle her, or to wean her from her earlier sympathies. Herford came to be known as an asylum for the distressed and persecuted, and it was with her active support that the followers of Jean de Labadie, who had a singular likeness to the Quakers, established themselves in the town. Not content with extending this direct protection, she used her influence with the Prince Elector for the promotion of religious liberty in the Palatinate, and at the request of Robert Barclay, she wrote more than once to her brother,

Prince Rupert, at Whitehall, to obtain the release of Quaker prisoners in Scotland.*

With her princely rank and authority she preserved a plain exterior and a most humble mind. She wrote not as a superior, scarcely even as an equal, to those Quaker leaders who addressed her. Her attitude is early shown in a letter sent by her to Fox after her first meeting with Penn and Barclay in 1677.

“Dear friend, I cannot but have a tender love to those that love the Lord Jesus Christ, and to whom it is given, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him: therefore your letter, and your friends’ visit, have been both very welcome to me. I shall follow their and your counsel, as far as God will afford me light and unction; remaining still, your loving friend, Elizabeth.” †

It was with reason that William Penn subscribed himself “more than I can say, Thy great lover and respectful friend,” excusing himself in his courtly way for his “freedom”: “Thou hast taught me to forget thou art a princess.” ‡

Barclay on his part was scrupulous to conceal her condescension from the knowledge of ignorant Friends, by whom it might have been misunderstood or abused. In 1676 he was sending copies of letters he had received from the Princess Elizabeth and her companion, the Countess of Horne, to Margaret Fell’s younger daughters,

“knowing you,” so he assures them, “to be Persons of education and Discretion, as will not let them fall into unsuitable Hands, for if their Freedom were made too public they would be straitened from using the like hereafter.” §

When Caton was drawn to visit Germany, towards the end of 1661, it was with the special wish to talk, as he

* Note to “Steven Crisp and his Correspondents,” by C. Fell Smith, pp. 19-23.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 388.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

§ Devonshire House MSS., Portfolio xvii. 101.

says, with "the Prince of Palatine." But bad news from Holland reached him on his arrival. Amsterdam had been swept by an epidemic, probably the plague, which was as frequent a visitor to the Dutch towns as to the English, and amongst its victims was Niesie Derrix, "that dear handmaid of the Lord." Young Will Caton may have been attracted at first to these widowed sisters through his love for his adopted mother in England, who was now herself a widow, and exposed to the enmity of her persecutors. He must have recognized more than a superficial likeness between the "nursing mother" of English Quakerism and Niesie Derrix, with her wide interests, and her trained business capacity always placed at the service of Friends. Her patience under the recent unexpected persecution had strengthened the bond which united her to her fellow-members, and particularly to her young pastor and friend. His sorrow over her death still breathes from the faded manuscript, and makes it as poignant reading as on that day in February, 1662, when Margaret Fell first opened it and learnt the news :

"My heart hath been often broken within mee and my eyes filled with teares when I have thought and spoke of dear Niesie . . . of whom I have formerly oftener then once spoke to thee, so that I beleieve thou wilt or hast felt how exceeding near the thing came me."*

The will of Niesie Derrix, which was not proved without opposition, is evidence of how well she merited the love of the Church she had served in her lifetime. She left 3,000 gulden to be set apart for the service of Friends in the ministry, and for the furtherance of the truth professed by the people called "Quakers." The sum was to be invested by three trustees,

"and at all times when any Friends in the ministry shall come to this country, they shall give them out of it, what sums they require to make use of."†

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 327.

† "Steven Crisp and his Correspondents," p. 33.

Niesie's death was the prelude to the marriage of her sister Annekin to William Caton. Thanks to his habit of confidence, his letters to Margaret Fell give a most ingenuous picture of the growth of this attachment, and the transference of his affection for the dead friend to her surviving and elder sister. His first sorrow had been largely compounded of fear for the future of Quakerism, lest the burden of the business and the care of the Church should prove too heavy for Annekin's unaccustomed shoulders. This anxiety, however, was set at rest by the news that her youngest married sister had joined her

"to be assistant to her in the Trade which they carry on together, so yt ye house yet remaines open for the service of the Truth."

But Caton could not so feel absolved from responsibility. Annekin was left desolate, and "without her right hand." Was it not his duty "to participate with her for the Truth's sake?"

"Niesie being removed, upon whom the service chiefly laid before . . . she hath now so much more need of a faithful help to be assistant to her."

This argument he states so fully and repeats so frequently that one fancies he is endeavouring to overcome his own reluctance to the step he was contemplating, rather than to persuade Margaret Fell of its necessity.*

Sentiment was the least of all ingredients in the love affairs of the early Quakers. Before he left Germany, Caton "began to feel a willingnesse in his spirit to submit to ye will of ye Lord"—a strange preparation for a proposal of marriage! He arrived in Amsterdam determined upon an elaborate plan of action.

Annekin's reception was "extraordinarye loving," and he "wanted not opportunity to impart his purpose." But

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 329.

he had resolved to take no step before consulting his brethren in the Church. He found them unanimous in their approval, and the time had now come, according to his programme, to propound to the lady the three questions which he had already composed. One is relieved to find that the catechism faded from his mind when the moment arrived for presenting it, and he broke the matter to her with tears, like any other loving and diffident wooer.

Yet these questions, inopportune as they now seem, were pathetically suited to the place and times :

1. Whether she would condescend to the thing, he having little or nothing as to the outward ?

2. Whether she would be willing to part with him when he was called to travel ?—a query hard to answer at this stage of the negotiation.

3. Whether she would be willing to bear what might follow—of sufferings and persecution, and a discontented spirit amongst her friends ?

Caton delivered them at last, under pressure from Annekin, and she retired with them for five or six weeks to brood over her answers.

This long delay, with her satisfactory and categorical replies, might well have ended his hesitation :

1. She did not look upon means, but upon virtue.

2. If it came to their marrying, she hoped she would never hinder him in his work.

3. When she had sufficient clearness in the thing itself, she doubted not she could bear what others said, which she believed would be one of her easiest crosses.

She concluded with the aspiration, time-honoured, it may be, even in the seventeenth century, that whatever happened, they would remain dear friends. But Caton could not yet grasp his fortune. He explained to his mistress the necessity that both he and she should set a good example, now and in the future, to all friends "that might hereafter be called unto the same thing." Nothing must be done precipitately.

“ Having laid the thing in ye ballance, we purposed to weigh it, and to have it thorowly weighed by ffriends and Bretheren.”

A more delicate and romantic passion might have been starved by these self-imposed delays, but when, after some weeks, William and Annekin recurred to the matter, their interview had gained a touch of human sentiment wanting hitherto in their deliberate courtship. Annekin confessed that the thought of such a marriage had crossed her mind, even before her sister's death, and before Caton's absence in Germany; but she had tried to banish it, as “ she could not perceive (how should she?) any-thing in his letters, tending to such a thing.” Conscious of her secret, she began to dread his return. Then, little by little, the conviction grew that the man she loved was no longer indifferent to her—probably his letters after the death of Niesie revealed more than he knew of his purpose. Yet now that the decision was actually presented to her, she could not tell what answer to make. Then, utterly breaking through her reserve, she burst into tears. Whatever came of it, she had given him her heart, and “ Wy zyn niet meer twee, maer een Vleeze.” At this, Caton observes, “ I was something moved, and the life in me began to arise, saying, ‘ She is the gift of God to thee.’ ”

Perhaps no one but himself could have proposed at this point that they should take the English Friends into consultation, and it was with evident reluctance that Annekin consented. He now sends them this careful and detailed account of all the proceedings, with the proviso, that the letter may not be too public, but imparted only to some of “ the dearest Brethren.” He adds, somewhat superfluously, that all further details can be filled in by William Ames.

When the English Friends had signified their approval, Caton lost his last trace of hesitation. His next intimation was sent to the Meeting of Friends at Swarthmoor, on the eve of his marriage.

“ Not having wished to change his condition ”—so runs

the ingenuous document—he has now “submitted and satisfied himself.” His impending marriage is to be published according to Fox’s regulations “two or three times in the Amsterdam Meeting, and at least once in England.”

The bridegroom was now twenty-five years of age, and it may be that his final description of the bride gives the unconscious explanation of all his backwardness, and the gauge of his love for “Truth.”

“The partie with whom it is to bee, being a discreet motherly widdow-woman (a Dutch woman), being clear, together with my selfe, in our owne perticulars, and fully satisfied of its being of ye Lord, having alsoe the mutuall consent and approbation of ffriends and bretheren, to whom it hath been propounded both in England and in this country.”*

Yet this unequal marriage was a singularly happy one during the three years which it lasted, and was never put to the test of time. The wedding day—October 31, 1662—was typical of those which were to follow. The newly married pair went from the Meeting-House to the funeral of William Ames. The pioneer of Dutch Quakerism had barely escaped with his life from the Bridewell of London, on the plea that he was a Dutch resident, and had returned to Amsterdam to die. His funeral was the scene of a riot—a fitting close to his brave and adventurous life, and a fitting prelude to the married life of William Caton and Annekin—troubled as it was by persecution, and soon to be broken by death.

Caton brought his wife to England in June of the following year. Judith Zinspinning travelled with them, and the two Dutch women gained their first insight into the real meaning of religious intolerance. They arrived in London when the fury of the persecution following the Quaker Act was at its height.

Wishing to attend the well-known meeting at the Bull-and-Mouth, they found the doors locked against

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 331.

them, and the congregation assembled in the street outside. Here, no sooner had a preacher risen to address them, than he was pulled down and haled away by the constables, while, nothing daunted, another speaker, woman or boy when all the men had been arrested, rose immediately in his place. Judith herself, a wondering spectator, narrowly escaped imprisonment.

"Several being thus led away," so her son describes the scene, "the constable came also to her, and perceiving by her dress that she was a Dutch woman, pulled her by the sleeve, and said with admiration, 'What, a Dutch Quaker!' but meddled no farther with her."*

Undeterred by the obvious danger, she spoke at several meetings in London, employing an interpreter. Later, however, she spoke, by the Friends' request, directly in Dutch, for so impressive was the influence which they felt behind her words, that they professed themselves indifferent to the literal meaning. Sewel observes that the reputation and love which she gained on this visit ensured him many years later a warm welcome to England.† After a stay of some weeks in London, she joined Caton's wife at Colchester, to return with her to Holland.

Nearly ten years before, a large colony of Dutch merchants resident in Colchester had accepted the Quaker message. In this year of 1663 the persecution was raging as fiercely in the provincial town as in the capital itself. The Meeting-Houses were closed and barred by order of the magistrates, and sixty Friends were imprisoned in the Moot Hall. Amongst these was Steven Crisp, the first convert to Quakerism in Colchester, and a noted travelling preacher. A few months later, in consequence, no doubt, of the Catons' visit, and of his friendship with the Dutch settlers in his own town, he was to take his first journey into Holland. In two more years he was to succeed to Caton's responsibilities as leader of the Dutch

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 4.

† *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Church. He became a close friend of the Derrix sisters, one of whom he afterwards married. This future, however, was little suspected by the group of Quakers from Holland, who now saw him for the first time in his prison at Colchester. But the experience they had gained of the English persecution was to press them more nearly yet.

Annekin and Judith returned to Amsterdam, leaving Caton to follow. The ship in which he sailed was caught in a fierce storm and put into Yarmouth. He escaped from the sea, only to be taken at a Friends' Meeting and thrown into the common gaol.

Steven Crisp's correspondence is now eloquent of the anxiety of wife and friends for the safety of the young prisoner, while the news of the plague that is once more raging in Amsterdam embitters his forced absence.* He writes to Crisp in February, 1664 :

"I have often heard from my dear wife, whose strength and patience under our present trial have made it something easier to me. I know not how a woman could more refresh her husband at such a distance, than she has me."†

In the same strain he writes to Margaret Fell :

"As I have writ of dear Annekie, soe I find her to be more and more, viz. a dear pretious and discreet woman, and we are both exceeding well satisfyed in ye thing."‡

This "discreet woman," troubled as she certainly was by her husband's danger, was not unwilling to improve the circumstance of his imprisonment at Yarmouth, in the interests of trade.

"My dear wife," he reports, "wrote to me a while agoe to buy 20 or 30 lb. worth of red Herrings, and send her over : and upon that occation ye Turnkey let me have Lybertie to goe forth about a Night and halfe a day about

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 98.

† "Steven Crisp and his Correspondents," p. 60.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 264.

buying and ordering them to be shipt to Holland : which was much more then could well be expected, seeing they have been and are yet soe severe towards us.”*

It seems, indeed, to have been the case at the time that extreme barbarity of treatment in prison was compatible with equal laxity in the matter of the attendance of the prisoner.

At last, early in May, Caton was released from Yarmouth gaol, and was writing once more from Amsterdam to his friend Crisp :

“ My wife is enjoying of me again, after that she had even given up hope of seeing my face again. That very day that she had given up hope, was I brought unexpectedly into her house at night, to the gladdening of her heart.”

Yet even while he wrote, after so long and perilous a separation, he was preparing for fresh travel and service in Haarlem and Leyden.†

The intercourse which had thus opened between Crisp and the Friends of Amsterdam was henceforth unbroken, save by death. During Crisp's next imprisonment, which occurred in November of the same year, Caton wrote that his wife was about to despatch “ two holland cheeses marked with a P ”—for him and his fellow-prisoners—a welcome gift which one hopes they enjoyed, unconfiscated by the gaoler.

Judith Zinspinning, too, was writing to him in these winter months, anxious for the health of her little son William, now ten years old, who was recovering from measles. This was almost the last trace of motherly care which the lad was to enjoy.

Judith died in 1664, after a short illness, in the presence of Caton, hastily summoned to her bedside by the frightened boy. She left behind her a number of trea-

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 264.

† “ Steven Crisp and his Correspondents,” p. 60.

tises, and a "Book of Proverbs," written during her stay in Colchester, and translated into English by Caton. She was still a young woman, greatly admired and sought after. Indeed, her son afterwards derived a quaint consolation from the fact that her death had removed her from the attentions of a persistent suitor, who afterwards brought discredit upon Friends.* Meanwhile the lonely boy remained at the house of his uncle, where, as Caton had written to Crisp, he "learns Latin, and is very apt at study, but childish in other things." The loss which Judith's death brought to the Quaker Church may be guessed from Caton's remark to Margaret Fell: "Since that dear Judith was removed, the weight of the service lyes chiefly upon mee."

Caton himself, though only twenty-eight, was nearing the term of his service. His last recorded act is described in a letter written by him to his adopted mother, on October 20, 1665.† War was again raging between England and Holland, and though the Great Plague was now at its height in London, the Government showed no sign of coming to terms. The prison of the Court of the Admiralty in Amsterdam was crowded with English sailors, half-starved and ragged, or even without shirts.

Pity for the prisoners was in that day the prerogative of the Quakers, and learnt in a hard school. It was probably during the visits to his unhappy fellow-countrymen, of which he tells in his last letter, that Caton caught the infection which was to prove fatal.

In the first week of December, 1665, the news of his death was broken abruptly and without comment to Margaret Fell, in a letter from London: "William Caton is out of ye Body."‡

With his death a new chapter was opened in the history of Quakerism in Holland. In place of the con-

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 179.

† Swarthmoor MSS., i. 333; and Sewel, vol. ii., p. 208.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 129. "Morgan Watkins to M. ff."

stant presence of Ames and Caton, there came the yearly visit of Steven Crisp of Colchester, and the great stir of the arrival of William Penn and of Fox himself, while from her convent in Herford the Princess Elizabeth watched over the fortunes of the Church she had learned to love. Two lonely widows were left of the four Derrix sisters, and in a few years the fortune made by their great business had been dispersed or shared with the Friends.

But the memory of the first heroic days lived on in the mind of a little boy, who was already addicted to Latin, and "very apt at all study." Early in the following century the son of Judith Zinspinning was to produce what is, in Charles Lamb's phrase, "the most edifying and affecting of all Church narratives," Sewel's "History of the Christian People called Quakers."

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST QUAKER WOMEN IN LONDON

A HOSTILE history "de la Naissance et du Progrez du Kouakerisme, avec Celle de ses Dogmes" was published at Cologne in 1692 by a French Protestant living in London. Its avowed object was to stir up the ashes of persecution against the followers of Fox, or "Renard," as the author calls him, instilling venom into the name by the mere act of translation. The surviving interest of the book lies in its introduction. It represents the attempt of a puzzled foreigner to picture and account for the religious and intellectual life of the Englishmen amongst whom he lived, a century before the rollicking nickname of John Bull had been fastened upon them, to mould, as has been suggested, their ideals and their conduct.

"Il n'y a personne," writes this anonymous historian, "qui ne sache que les Anglois generalement parlant ont beaucoup de panchant à la melancolie, et qu'ainsi ils sont d'un temperament à faire des Enthousiastes, des Phnatiques, et des Fous."

This temperament he attributed to two insular customs—the eating of meat, and the burning of coal in open grates, whence pestilential vapours arose within and without to trouble the mind and pervert the actions.*

The inner life of the quaint medieval city which was Cromwell's London was, indeed, such as to call forth and justify the most far-fetched of theories. In 1640, before the outbreak of the Civil War, Clarendon described the

* "Histoire Abrégée de la Naissance et du Progrez du Kouakerisme avec Celle de ses Dogmes." A Cologne, chez Pierre Marteau, 1692.

metropolis as the "sink of all the ill-humour of the Kingdom." The ten years which followed the execution of Charles I. found it still worthy of this description. It was a house divided against itself, not only in politics, but in religion.

The Aldermanic and upper classes, who, until 1649, had led the progressive section of the country, were becoming, after the fall of the Monarchy, increasingly Royalist in sentiment. They adhered for the most part to the Presbyterian Church.* A small but not wholly negligible party still clung to the Church of England, and in one London church (St. Gregory's) alone the use of the liturgy was connived at as late as the year 1655. In the five years which followed it became a common thing for a clergyman to be arrested in the act of reading the Church Service, particularly at the celebration of Christmas. In 1658, when contributions were called for throughout England for the relief of survivors of the Piedmontese, those "slaughtered saints," Evelyn records "a collection for persecuted and sequestered ministers of the Church of England, whereof divers are in prison."†

While the upper classes in the city were thus divided against themselves and against the Government by ancient loyalty or political conviction, it was amongst the lower strata of the population that Cromwell found his most consistent supporters. Amongst them, also, the innumerable subdivisions of sect and heresy took root and flourished.

"The parish churches," so Evelyn wrote in 1656 on a visit to London, "were filled with sectaries of all sorts, blasphemous and ignorant mechanics usurping the pulpits everywhere."‡

* "History of London," by H. Douglas Irvine, p. 233. Constable 1912.

† "Diary and Correspondence of John Evelyn," p. 226. Routledge.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

Judging from the testimony of serious contemporaries, and from the evidence of effects produced, this universal absorption in religious questions tended neither to enlightenment nor spirituality.

"There was now nothing practical preached," so the same diarist laments, "or that pressed reformation of life, but high and speculative points and strains that few understood, which left people very ignorant, and of no steady principles, the source of all our sects and divisions, for there was much enmity and uncharity in the world: God of his mercy amend it!"*

In the spring of 1654 Quakerism was introduced into London in the shape of a pamphlet written by Fox, and addressed "To All that would know the way of the Kingdom." It was distributed in the streets by two North Country women, Isabel Buttery and a companion, and, backed by their explanatory words, it met with an extraordinary welcome. The message was singularly timely to that over-instructed people, and found a lodgment, like Fox's earliest preaching, "in hearts already prepared to receive it." It brought before all else an element of practical everyday piety into that confusion of theories.

"I have long professed to serve and worshipp ye true God," so a Westmorland convert had written in the previous year, "and, as I thought, abbove many sects attained to a high pitch in Religion, but now alas, I finde . . . my Notions were swellinge vanities without power or life. What it was to love Enemyes, to blesse them yt curse, to render good for evil, to use the world as using it not, to lay down life for the Brethren, I never understood."†

These virtues, and the last above all, were to distinguish the Quakers of London during the chequered years which followed.

It was amongst the Seekers and Waiters, with some few of the Ranters, that the first members were recruited.

* Evelyn's Diary, p. 219.

† Swarthmoor MSS., i. 87.

Two brothers, Simon and Robert Dring, opened their doors to the women messengers, and at their houses in Watling Street and Moorgate the earliest meetings of Friends were held in London. They must have formed a strange contrast to the heated debates or controversial harangues which were the mark of religious services of that day. They were conducted for the most part in silence, only Isabel being moved occasionally "to speak a few words."*

At this early and almost inarticulate stage of their history the London Quakers were not free from hostile criticism. A letter written by an apprentice in June, 1654, tabulates a list of complaints brought against him by his master, the chief being "that I frequented a meeting in Moorfields where there is none but two women that are preachers." Nor did the pioneers distribute their books without opposition. Their zeal led them to ignore the Levitical restrictions placed upon the Sabbath, and the same letter relates the experiences of Isabel on her way to Watling Street from Westminster, where "her heart had been drawn forth" to sell her books, "on the last first day."

"As she came back by Paul's, the Mayor caused the Marshall, so called, to bring her before him, and her spirit was carried out valiantly. So they went together into the vestry, where she, as we were informed, was louder in discourse to him, ye Aldermen and recorder, so called, than the priest was in his pulpit. So they sent her to the House of Correction called Bridewell, and another maid that went with her, which was Robert Drinn's maid of Moorfields. . . . Their Pharasaical spirit would not suffer such things on their sabbath day."†

Bridewell was a prison provided for offences "of the third degree," and reserved for offenders of the lowest

* "London Friends' Meetings," by Beck and Ball, p. 19. London, 1869.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 93.

class, both men and women, who "were chastised and compelled to labour, to the overthrow of the vicious life of idleness." *

Such disproportionate punishments, familiar enough after the Restoration, were very rare during the four and a half years which remained of Cromwell's government. Moreover, in distinction to their sufferings at this period in the country districts, the isolated cases of suffering in the capital had at least a basis of justice, and followed upon deliberate, if conscientious, provocation.

Behind London Quakerism in those early years stands the great figure of Oliver Cromwell—humorous, kindly, sympathetic—only at rare moments exasperated by the pretensions of a sect, who, adjure them as he might, could never think it possible that they might be mistaken. His judgment, always fair, and frequently merciful, carried weight in the city; whereas offenders in remoter districts lay under the judgment of the Major-Generals, appointed in 1655, or the discretion of local justices.

Cromwell was described by Clarendon, his open enemy and secret admirer, as

"able to bear ill language and reproaches with less disturbance and concernment than any person in authority had ever done." †

Nowhere did this characteristic stand him in better stead than in his dealings with the Quakers. His constant appeals to their sense of fair play, no less than to the leniency of their persecutors in the country districts, won scant recognition from either party. The hard words showered upon him every day by the rank and file of the Friends give a beautiful generosity to his love of Fox at first sight—one of the most touching things in history, and an honour to both men.

While the Protector's rare moments of leisure were constantly disturbed by personal applications, the list of

* Quoted in "London Friends' Meetings," p. 20.

† Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," p. 850. Oxford, 1839.

his undesired correspondents is headed by Margaret Fell, and comprises almost every name, prominent or obscure, amongst the early Quakers. Their remonstrances, which were delivered for the most part by the women members of the London Meeting, covered a wide field, from the detailed demands of the old soldier, John Stubbs, for "free passage in cities, towns, and villages, whither the Lord Protector of Heaven and Earth should send him," down to the formless rhapsody with its exordium: "Love, Oliver, Love! O man, here is love, love! Come away!"

Meanwhile the Society in the capital, being free from persecution, revealed itself more and more as a settled Church after the Apostolic pattern. London at the time of the Protectorate was a walled city of half a million inhabitants. As meetings were set up here and there in the midst of this great population, the conditions of their growth and the atmosphere which surrounded them differed widely from those which were experienced in the provinces. The preachers gave their time to evangelistic work, while the ordinary members, and particularly the women, devoted themselves to practical service amongst the sick and poor, and, in later years, amongst the prisoners.

A strict system of organization and discipline was soon found to be necessary, and governing bodies were established, which were to set the model for Quakerism throughout England. Fox's long and frequent visits, and his almost continuous residence during the last years of his life, transferred to the capital the authority and influence which had belonged originally to the Swarthmoor Meeting.

The seed sown by the two pioneer women was watered by others, and quickly gave promise of a surprising harvest. The year of 1654 was one of triumph for the Quaker Church, as for England at large. While the pride of Holland had been humbled on the seas, and almost every European country was suing for a treaty on his own terms with the victorious Cromwell, West-

morland and the Dales had sent out their peaceful legionaries, two by two, to conquer the South of England. Early in June, Edward Burrough and Francis Howgill came up to London to carry on the work of Isabel and her companion. Robert Dring, who had been already convinced, received them into his house at Moorfields, and their first meetings were held on his premises, probably in his draper's shop. Before they had spent a month in London,

"a report," writes one of their converts, "spread about ye city yt there was A sort of People come there yt went by yt name of Plain north Cuntry ploughmen, who did differ in Judgment to all other People in yt city."*

It was not in the nature or programme of these missionaries to confine themselves to quiet and established meetings. Their first service outside their bounds was in the assemblies for argument and debate, which played a great part in the stirring religious life of that day. They had recourse also to less orthodox methods of gaining a hearing. Sewel relates how Edward Burrough attended a wrestling match in the fields outside London, where he stepped into the ring and addressed the astonished champion and the crowd assembled to watch him.† Though their plain speech and searching message aroused a storm of opposition from the "subtle Londoners," they carried conviction to hundreds and even thousands. At the end of three months they were holding three or four meetings every week, and were "much put to it" to find a place large enough to hold their congregations. In this same winter of 1654 Fox was carried under guard from Leicester to London, on his refusal to give any bond for his future behaviour, and lodged (strange conjunction) at "ye Myrmaide over against ye mewes at Charinge Crosse." Cromwell, before whom he was brought, set him at once at liberty, assuring

* "First Publishers of Truth," p. 163.

† Sewel, vol. i., p. 149.

him, after much talk, and with tears in his eyes, that he wished him no more ill than he did to his own soul. Fox being now free, stayed on in London, almost mobbed by the crowds which flocked to hear him, and himself keenly interested in the many-sided activities and even in the fashions of the city. An entry in the Journal summarizes the results of this visit: "And a great convincement was in London, and many in O.P. (*i.e.*, Oliver Protector) house and family."*

It was probably at this time that Cromwell's daughter, Lady Elizabeth Claypole, made the acquaintance of Fox, which was to prove so great a comfort to her in her last illness. Other Friends were gained at the Court, notably John Swyntoun of Swyntoun, the trusted counsellor of Cromwell, and ancestor of Sir Walter Scott. Another Court convert was Harvey, Oliver's own "gentleman," to whose tenderly worded account Carlyle was indebted for his description of the Protector's last days; and Mary Sanders, "one of Oliver's wife's maydes," who was to be useful henceforth in the forwarding of petitions. One London member upon whom Fox's visit had a marked influence was Ann Downer, who had been amongst the first convinced by the two pioneer women. Unlike the majority of the Quakers, whose humble birth and lack of learning aroused the ridicule of their opponents, she was the daughter of a country clergyman, and her excellent education embraced shorthand and arithmetic, subjects which we learn from a contemporary writer were unknown in the girls' schools of the period.† Her life in her father's house at Charlbury, in Oxfordshire, was summed up in her obituary in a single sentence. After her mother's death, Ann brought up and educated her younger sister, who recorded that "she was a blessing to my father's house."

Soon after her convincement, which took place on a

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 170.

† Mary Astell, in the "Defence of the Female Sex," p. 37. 1696.

visit to London, she returned to Charlbury, and held services in the town of which her father was the Vicar. It was not to be expected that a "priest of Baal" would look sympathetically upon his daughter's conversion to Quakerism, and the visit resulted in complete alienation from her family, "whom she had shown much kindness to." Henceforth her home and her service were in London.*

It was not until after Fox's arrival that she came into prominence as the first woman preacher in the city, and there is little doubt that she entered upon her public career under his inspiration. Thirty years old in 1654, she was of the same age as Fox, and a friendship was now formed between them which gave rise two years later to one of the most beautiful and striking incidents in Quaker annals. But the earliest recorded service of this Vicar's daughter in London was the interruption of a "priest" in the church at Stepney. Cromwell's first words to Fox had been a reproach that "we quarreld with ye preists," a sore point with the Protector, whose ambition was that all sects should live and let live under his government. The reproach was already abundantly justified in the provinces, but now for the first time a Quaker was to suffer in London for this offence. Besse's chronicler records her punishment :

"Ann Downer was committed to the House of Correction, and detained there ten Weeks, and because she refused to work, was beaten with a Rope's End."†

She probably found a companion in the prison, in the person of Rebecca Ward, a travelling preacher of more zeal than wisdom. She had been haled before the magistrate in these same months of 1655 for preaching in Cheapside, and causing a block in the crowded thoroughfare, and after examination she, too, was committed to Bridewell.‡

Fox's presence left its mark not only upon the lives

* Testimony by Rebecca Travers, in "Piety Promoted by Faithfulness." 1686.

† Besse, vol. i., p. 361.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., i. 161.

of individuals, but upon the government of the infant Church. During his visit, and, one may safely conclude, at his recommendation, the meetings, which had become unmanageably large, were divided into two classes: the public, quaintly called "Threshing Meetings," which corresponded with mission services of the present day, and the silent, or "Retired Meetings," which were held in private houses for converts who had already been "reached." Six months after the arrival of Burrough and Howgill it became necessary to take a large Meeting-House for the accommodation of the crowds who gathered to listen to their preaching. A hall, capable of holding 1,000 persons, was secured in Aldersgate Street, on the premises of an old inn called the Bull and Mouth—a strange conversion for a building which had doubtless, in Elizabethan days, done duty as a theatre for strolling players. This became the city Meeting House, the "threshing-floor" of Burrough's vivid phrase, which was to go down to posterity as the scene of the most brutal persecution and the most unflinching bravery that have ever been known in England. At the same time no less than thirty convinced Friends, of whom the great majority were women, offered their houses in various parts of the city for the holding of private meetings.*

Before the end of the year James Nayler came up to London for that period of service which was to end so disastrously for himself and for Quakerism. The best known and the most ill-fated of all Fox's converts, an ex-soldier like Stubbs and Ames, he had been called from the plough to take up the work of a travelling minister. He was now in his fourth year of service, and his preaching and writing were already familiar to the Friends in many parts of the country. The piquant contrast between his rough yeoman's clothes and his polished eloquence—a rare gift amongst the early Quakers—won him a hearing from the curious citizens of London.

* "London Friends' Meetings," p. 24.

"He preached," says Sewel, "in such an eminent manner, that many admiring his great gift began to esteem him much above his brethren, which as it brought him no benefit so it gave occasion of some difference in the society."*

The rift did not at once become apparent. For some months Nayler worked loyally with Burrough and Howgill, a welcome and honoured helper. The authorities smiled upon their efforts, and Nayler's report sent to Fox at the end of 1654 reads strangely in the light of the legalized persecution of the next decade.

"Many are now gathering in of late, a fresh seed is appearing. There is a meeteinge in ye Stran on ye first days, and great tumults somtimes, which God make of servis to call people in to our meeteings. they have brooke ye windows as in tower street: many about White hall are much ashamed of it, and Justice Blake sent out warants to ye constables to prevent it, and came himselfe, and much desired ye names of any of them yt did harme. One wicked woman who beat divers freinds they tooke away, but ye man of ye house said he freed her for what she had done to him, yet I heare she is under baile. She is a very wicked woman, but now quiet."†

Nayler's description of a meeting held by invitation at Lady D'Arcy's in the following year illustrates another side of his influence:

"Many," he wrote to Margaret Fell, "was there from the Cort, some called lords, as it is said, divers ladyes, divers officers of ye armie, some of ye hiest priests in ye cittie, how many I know not, for they got behind a seeleinge and came not out till I was gone. Not one preist would speake a word, nor stand up for their kingdome."‡

He was indeed a formidable debater, and a few months later in Fox's company was to win a dispute over seven or eight priests, "yt all ye people sawe ye preists was

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 255.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 76.

‡ *Ibid.*, 80.

nothings and foiled : and cryed, a Nailor a Nailor hath confuted ym all."* His prowess stood him in good stead in a city where religious debate was the most popular form of entertainment.

On the other hand, his charm and gentleness seem from the first to have won many women to be his converts. It is significant that the one descriptive phrase which has come down to us of the pioneer Isabel Buttery states that she was "well-known to James Nayler." Before the year of his service in London was out, the admiration of his women followers was to prove his undoing, but the record of its early months is one of humble service and overwhelming activity.

It was to Nayler that the Quaker Church in London owed the conviction of Rebecca Travers, the wife of a tobacconist in Watling Street, who became, with Ann Downer, the leader of the Women's Meeting. A zealous Baptist, like Elizabeth Hooton, she was driven by curiosity to a meeting of her own Church in Broad Street, where Nayler was to hold a dispute,

"and would have been glad," says the old diarist Whiting, "to have heard the Baptists get the Victory. But when she came, it proved quite the contrary, for the Country-Man stood up on a Form over against the Baptists, and they were so far from getting the Victory, that she could feel his Words smote them : that one or two of them confess, they were Sick, and could hold it no longer."

After the defeat of her teachers, Rebecca Travers, "confounded and ashamed," frequented the Quaker meetings at the Bull and Mouth, but could not quickly make up her mind to throw in her lot with the despised and ignorant people. Whiting's account of her final surrender gives some hint of the influence wielded by the most extraordinary of the Quaker apostles :

"A Friend of hers invited her to dinner with J.N. and others ; one call'd a Gentleman, who had run through all

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 195.

Professions, and had high Notions, and many curious Questions to J.N. which he answer'd with great Wisdom, but not so plainly as she would have had him, because she coveted to know hidden things: on which J.N. putting his Hand over the Table, and taking her by the Hand, said, Feed not on Knowledge, it is as truly forbidden to thee, as ever it was to Eve; it is good to look upon, but not to feed on: for who feeds on Knowledge, dies to the innocent Life: which he spoke in Power, and was received by her as the Word of Truth."*

How pure was the affection she bore him is proved in nothing so much as her aloofness from the band of adoring women who made strife between Howgill and Nayler, and by their blasphemous worship brought him finally to his doom. In the lowest depths of his humiliation, it was Rebecca Travers who washed the wounds of his cruel scourging, and was not ashamed to write a "certificate" on his behalf which was presented to the Parliament.

Another woman convert and loyal friend was Sarah Blackbury, who became the inspirer of the Women's Meeting. She lives now only through the inclusion of her name in a sentence of Fox's Journal, but such tantalizing hints as may be won from the ancient manuscripts reveal a woman of warm affection, keen intuition, and considerable literary skill. The fragment of her autobiography which is buried in a stout and musty volume labelled "Friends' Books, 1669," repays its disinterment, and is alive with poetic feeling. This is the more remarkable from the fact that it was written at the end of a decade more barren of poetry than any period in English literature before or since; when Milton's inspiration had been quenched in political controversy, and the vogue of doggerel was debasing the public taste in the form of dedications and tail-pieces. The matter of "The Just and Equall Ballance Discovered" is, moreover, of deep

* "Persecution Exposed," by John Whiting, pp. 176, 177. London, 1715.

interest as a revelation of the innermost soul of a Seeker, one of the sect which furnished its best members to the Quaker Church. But its interest is not of her own time alone. It relates the experience of the longing soul of all ages, and the insistent beat of its phrases recalls the "Hound of Heaven," with its ever-recurring burden:

"That love never left me nor forsook me, but thorough many troubles and tribulations in spirit, was still with me: though it suffered long, it still was kind to me: though I knew it not, yet it persued me with love, and visited me with reproofs, even from my verie childhood: and though I was long a Professor, I never knew that this love that . . . sighed and groaned and suffered in me, was that which would work redemption for me."*

Like Judith Zinspinning, Sarah had already received a revelation of the Inward Light before it was more fully made known to her by the Quakers.

"I received their testimony," she writes, "which was one with that spirit which witnessed in me, from my childhood to that very day, and my heart was glad."

In 1659, the year of Nayler's release from prison, she wrote a "Paper" in his defence, proving her loyalty to the disgraced and broken leader. The pamphlet had its origin in a strange mystical experience. A band of scribblers rushed into print during that time of controversy, stirring up the hearts of Friends against a man who had once been their faithful minister, and had already suffered for and repented his short-lived defection, even unto death. One gathers from Sarah Blackbury's ingenuous confession how absorbing was the theme, and how keen the rivalry between accuser and excuser.

"One morning, being awake in my bed, the word of ye Lord spake in me thus: Do thou arise, and go to Gerard Roberts house, (the headquarters of the Quaker leaders in

* "The Just and Equall Ballance Discovered," by Sarah Black-borow, p. 8.

London) and speak for James. . . . In obedience to it I went, and wayteing there some hours, I would have come away, but offering to go, I found I could not. . . . After some time, one came to mee with a paper in his hand, laying it down before mee, pressing me to read it. But finding my heart pricked as with the point of some sharp thing, I felt it was that spirit that gave it forth to hurt my life. I denyed the reading of it, for in the life of God that spirit was judged, as feeling its wounds before one word was read, or the paper opened, or the least knowledge of what it was or whose it was, or whom it concerned.”*

To the early Quakers the world of half-lights and intuitions was at least equally vivid with the actual world around them. Her instinctive prejudice was cited by Sarah Blackbury as the sufficient reason for the writing of her “Paper,” and lent it a mystic authority as it went “forth in city and cuntrey, where ever yt paper of Henry Clarke shall be heard of.”

But Nayler’s apologist provides one more example of the beautiful paradox which was constantly worked out in the lives of these primitive believers. Dreamer and poet though she was, she proved herself perhaps the most practical in good works of all the London women. She first, in 1655, brought the Quaker message to Hammer-smith, “a town in Middlesex, being five or six miles out of the city to the westward,” where she held meetings in a private house.† It was in her arms that Hubberthorne died in Newgate, and through her representations that Fox set up the Women’s Meeting to care for the sick and needy and prisoners.

In June, 1655, Howgill and Burrough were called to leave their work in London to the care of James Nayler, while they crossed to Dublin, to begin their organized mission in Ireland. The year also marked a new stage in the life of the Quaker Church as a whole. Serious

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 41.

† “Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of Gilbert Latye,” p. 14. London, 1707.

persecution had set in after the passing of the Act which required all loyal subjects to take the Oath of Abjuration. Cromwell, mistaking the Friends' conscientious motives for refusal, and embittered against the impliable sect by "the wicked priests, presbyterians and Independents" who surrounded him, began, in Fox's pregnant phrase, "to harden."

Rebellion was growing to a head, moreover, in the heart of the Quaker camp. Nayler's followers, who had alienated him from his fellow-leaders, were instilling their spirit of indiscipline and vain-glory into the rank and file of the Friends. It was easy to debase the doctrine of the Inward Light into a licence for every kind of extravagance, and the equality in the sight of God which it implied led them to the rejection of all authority.

Restiveness under control was a characteristic of Englishmen inevitable at the time of the Commonwealth. It followed upon the fall of every known authority—the execution of the King, and the deposition of the Established Church. Levellers in the Army and Fifth Monarchy Men in the religious world were symptoms of a disease which had spread through all ranks and sects. It was to show itself henceforth in the Quaker Church by the spasmodic denial of Fox's supremacy and the rejection of his rulings. Scarcely had the Nayler controversy died down before Perrot took up the tale; and only in the extremity of outward persecution was the Church at peace from internal treachery.

Two London women in particular, Mildred and Judy, who had long been tinged with Ranterism, espoused the subversive doctrines of Nayler's followers, and attempted to commend them by militant methods.

As early as March 20, 1656, Richard Hubberthorne, a faithful friend to Nayler, was writing to Margaret Fell:

"Yesterday which was ye 5 day of the weeke, wee had a meetinge at ye bull and mouth and Mildred was there

in all Impudence and I haveinge spokne somthing in ye livinge power of ye lord to the people, shee was tormented, and shee resolved soe to speake as that I should not speake any more to them. And when she had spokne until her naturell brith was spent, she again still did strive to speake, and often told the people that they should not hear a word from me, stay as long as they would together, for she intended to speake as long as they stayed. And in ye living power of ye lord I was cept and moved to stay. The meeting began at the 3 hower, and we stayed almost untill midnight, for I was to stay. And much of ye Lord was found in it, for she did soe strive in her wickednes until all her naturall parts was spent, and her sences distracted, and she was even really mad. And truth raigned in pure dominion, and in the life of truth was all freinds refreshed. . . . Yet she said that at the next meeting shee would come in more power, and we should not speak a word. But the next meetinge she did not come at all, for shee hath soe destroyed her naturall parts that she is so horsie yt shee cannot speake at present. And it is like gods judgments will come upon her sudainly." *

Retribution lingered, however, and through the following autumn, when Nayler made his tragic triumphal entry into Bristol, "the impudent lasse yt saide she was above ye apostles" was going every Sunday to the Bull and Mouth to interrupt, and, if possible, talk down the preacher, "crying against Fox pope men ministery time and place." †

So serious was the opposition of the two women that Fox wrote stern letters "to mildard and judith" disowning them and their deeds. The rebuke addressed to "mildard" may be quoted as a type of the many papers of denunciation called for at this period:

"Thou hast rayled upon ye liveing god, and thou hast an unpardonable sin comitted, and thy deciples are like dogges running up and downe to take and worry ye Lambs. But ye Life is set above you all and ye rodd

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 12.

† *Ibid.*, i. 104.

is known, yt which must order you all. I say unto thee, plucke in thy hornes, James, and not push against the Lambs, for ye Corner stone is set upon your heads.”*

It is a relief to turn from these extravagances to the quiet work of the loyal London women. Four years before the establishment of the Women’s Meeting, the activities which were then grouped and systematized were all present, though tentatively, amongst them. The visiting and relief of prisoners under the Clarendon Code was to become the heaviest burden of the Friends in London, and was delegated in great part to the women. The experience gained by Ann Downer in 1656 enabled her in 1660 to become their acknowledged leader, “by me,” as Rebecca Travers, herself a grave and indefatigable worker, confessed in her Memoir, “rather to be admired than imitated.”

Nine weeks before the Lent Assizes of 1656 Fox with his companions was thrown into prison at Launceston, having refused to give a promise of good behaviour. During the eight or nine months which he lay there Cornwall became the centre of attraction for all those who wished to consult him, like Thomas Holme, upon their own conduct, or to offer him relief—a vain offer, for as Fox wrote of one such pilgrim, “Wee accepted of his love, but refused his money.” So universal was the sympathy aroused by this imprisonment, and so great the coming and going upon the Cornish roads, that a special order was issued to the constables to apprehend all travelling Quakers—an order which intercepted Nayler, amongst others, on a journey which might have saved him and the Quaker Church a world of error and misery.

The Doomsdale at Launceston, where Fox and his friends were cast by the malice of the gaoler, was a place whose very name stinks in the nostrils—

“a nasty stinkinge place, where they saide few people came out alife: where they used to put witches and

* Swarthmoor MSS., ii. 42.

murderers before there execution . . . and hee woulde not lett us cleanse it nor lett us have beds nor strawe to lye one: and it was all like mire: and in some places att ye toppe of ye shooes in water . . . and what with ye stincke and what with ye smoake wee was like to bee choakt and smothered in Doomes dale."

Their very food was grudged to the unfortunate captives, and a young woman who brought them water and meat was so harassed by the gaoler that she was almost stopped in her friendly office.

It must have been at this point of his sore need that Fox wrote to Ann Downer to come to him from London.*

He possessed those invaluable gifts in a leader—an eye for character, and a retentive memory. During his short visit to London two years before he had formed an estimate of Ann Downer which agreed in every detail with the testimony written at her death by Rebecca Travers, a close friend of thirty years' standing. This testimony speaks of Ann's

"open heart and diligent hand, her providence and industry, her readiness in accounts and disposing of it more then many, for her abillities therein exceeded most."†

When he summoned this ministering angel, Fox further took into account her rare accomplishments of arithmetic and shorthand. He looked to her to keep the prisoners' money, and to take down the messages which were on his heart to utter, to his judges no less than to his bereaved followers. For, as Ellwood notes in his quaint style,

"That good man (like Julius Cæsar), willing to improve all parts of his time, did usually, even in his Travels, dictate to his Amanuensis what he would have committed to writing."‡

The tribute which he wrote with his own hand after her death "Consaring der an whighthead" shows how

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., pp. 227-242.

† "Piety Promoted by Faithfulness," 1686.

‡ "History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood," p. 269. London, 1906.

fresh was the memory of these services after thirty succeeding years of hardship and travel. Incidentally, the wild eccentricity of its spelling is a proof of the contempt which he frequently expressed for "carnal learning."

"When i was in presen at lanston in corenwell in the yer 1655 and 1656, being put in domes dale a very bad preson and under a very bad jaler i did wright and send for an domner for then shee was not marred and shee cam afoot above 200 miles to mee when i and som other frends was in the jale. And shee layed in the toune of lanston and shee did get ouer meet and dres it and brought it to us in presen and was very sarvesable to us and to the truth. And carrd her selef very wisly in the wisdom of god and was a good savour among the people and her good and blamves life and convers(at)ion did preach among them. Then ther being but few frendes in Cornwell and in devensher and dosetsher and Suemersetsher, but throw the lords mersy befor that wee came out of presen ther was many convinsd of godes trouth, and ternd to him. And shee did continu with us untill wee wer sit at libarty out of prisen. And as shee came on foot above 100 honderd miles from london to cornwell shee did convince many people and som of an acount, and like wise as shee did travell back throw frendes from Cornewell to london did conferme and stableshe severall that was newly convinsd. And since that time hath bene very servesable and a trou sarvent in the chruch of Christ as presele and Leahe were."*

While the lot of those in prison was rendered more bearable by the care of Friends who were still at liberty, a great branch of the women's work was concerned with the writing and forwarding of petitions for their release. A typical instance of their intercession may be taken from this same year of 1656.

When Fox lay in loathsome captivity in Cornwall, a Quaker had offered himself to Cromwell as a substitute, to "lie body for body," for his leader and friend, an offer which was generally followed in the provinces by the

* MS. framed in Friends' Library, Devonshire House, London.

arrest of the petitioner. The Protector could not grant his request, "being contrary to law"; but turning to the courtiers who stood around him, he asked with a trace of wistful melancholy: "Which of you would do as much for me if I were in the same condition?"* A few months later the offer was repeated by a woman, on behalf of a youth then imprisoned at Bury St. Edmunds.

George Whitehead, who was later to become the leader of the London Quakers and the second husband of Ann Downer, was at this date a lad in his teens. His sufferings in the gaol at Bury St. Edmunds, where he had been cast after a successful mission in Suffolk, so moved his old friend and fellow townswoman, Margaret Sutton, that she offered herself to the judge as a prisoner in his stead.

"Judge Atkins!" so her address ran, "whereas I have offered myself unto thee for my friend George Whitehead, to lie in Bonds or what else might be inflicted on him, so he may go forth free, or to lay down my Life for him, I was and am willing. Margaret Sutton."†

The judge ignored her repeated request, and she travelled up to London to make application at headquarters. Here the "waiting - gentlewoman," Mary Sanders, was "very Serviceable." She introduced the petitioner to her master, with the result that an order was issued in October for the immediate release of Whitehead and his fellow-prisoners.

Cromwell's sympathies had already been gained by Fox, and his interest was strengthened by the discovery of a Quaker within his own household. An incident is recorded in the Journal which throws a welcome light upon the Protector's domestic relations, and the friendly footing which he maintained with his servants during these years of public triumph. Fox had returned to London on his release from Doomsdale, and meeting Cromwell in

* Besse, vol. i., p. 113.

† *Ibid.*, p. 662.

the Park, rode along by the side of his coach, speaking to him on "his condition and the sufferinges of freindes in ye nation."

"And ye next day one of Olivers wifes maydes Mary Sanders came uppe to mee to my lodgeinge and saide yt her master came to her and saide hee coulde tell her some good news and shee askt him what it was: if it were good yt was well: and hee saide unto her, G: Fox was come to tounde: and shee saide yt was good news indeed: but could haredly beleive it: butt hee tolde her howe I mett him and ridd from Hyde parke doune to James parke with him."*

Personally attracted as Cromwell might be to their leader, he had begun to despair of gentle measures in his dealings with the Quakers in the country. All attempts had failed to reconcile them to the existence of other religious bodies, or to the just rights of the magistrates. The lamb steadfastly refused to lie down with the lion. "He is in great danger to be lost," Camm and Howgill had written after their first interview with the Protector in 1654, "for he holds that all the worships of this nation is the worship of God: but the blind cannot judge of truth."†

While a campaign of insult and interruption was being waged against the priests and their services, Parliament neglected no opportunity of stiffening such laws as they thought might restrain the actions of the Quakers. In 1656 Henry Cromwell banished Burrough and Howgill from Ireland, on account of their disintegrating influence upon the army. The temper of the ruling classes in England was shown all too clearly by the savage sentence passed upon Nayler in the autumn of that year—a sentence which Cromwell in vain attempted to mitigate. When the Parliament reassembled in January, 1657, they presented their "Petition and Advice," which had for its

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 259.

† Devonshire House A.R.B. Collection, 20.

main purpose the offer of the Crown. But its tenth clause requested the punishment of those who openly reviled the godly ministers or their assemblies, or disturbed their services,* a request with which the Protector had already shown himself in sympathy.

Two months later, Hubberthorne, who had succeeded to Nayler's work in the capital, was writing in evident consternation to George Fox, to report an address given by Cromwell in Whitehall to "the Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council men."

"And in his declaration he spoke more against freinds then ever before he formerly expressed, sayinge that there was a good law made against the Quakers, and they did well to put it in execution: and he would stand by them, for he said they weare against both magistie and ministry: soe that hee and them all is hardned against ye truth and all their pretences of settinge freinds at liberty which they weare once about is now ceased at present, and they only plottinge how to exalt themselves in the earth."†

This declaration stirred the Friends to renewed letters and interviews. The sense of retribution, which was always present with them during persecution, inspired them to prophecies of woe, of which many, explain it as one may, were literally fulfilled. One woman was hardly restrained by Fox's common sense from an act of treason which would probably have cost her her life.

"For there came a woman to mee in ye Strann yt had a prophesy concerneinge Kinge Charles three yeeres before hee came in, and shee tolde mee shee must goe to him to declare it. Soe I told her shee shoulde waite upon ye Lord, and keepe it to her selfe, for if it shoulde bee knowne yt shee went they woulde looke upon it to bee treason."‡

This prophetess was Esther Biddle, who became a prominent member of the Women's Meeting. She had newly

* Braithwaite, p. 451.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 13.

‡ Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 342.

returned from a mission to Barbados, and had an interesting record of service as a travelling minister in "ye Straites" and Newfoundland. Her interest in public affairs took her to France, in the days of William and Mary, where she exhorted Louis XIV. to his face to put an end to the long wars.

About this time another woman named Eliza Adams stood at the door of the Houses of Parliament, and broke a pitcher, as a sign that they should be broken to pieces, "which," says Fox, "came to pass presently after." A diffident letter was written by her to Fox immediately after this exploit, some doubt of its wisdom having apparently crossed her mind:

"I hop thou need not be ashamed of mee, but if I have misbehavd my selfe in any thing as concerning the truth, if thou have a word from the lord, deare frend, deale plainly with mee."*

Domestic and public sorrows crowded in upon Cromwell during the last months of his life. Through the spring of 1658 his favourite daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, lay dying. She had long been a "Seeker"—a condition which her father, with a characteristic touch, described as "being of the next best sect to a Finder." Though she had never actually united herself to the Quakers, she was connected with them through her husband's brother, James, who was a member of the society. Fox has left a touching account of his relations with her during her last illness:

"Her they caled ye Lady Claypole was very sicke and troubled in minde and nothings coule comfort her. And I was moved of ye Lord to write a paper and sent it to her to bee reade unto her, and shee saide Itt settled and stayde her minde for ye present."

This letter, which is given in full by Sewel, is a beautiful example of Fox's dealing with the sick and troubled, and

* Swarthmoor MSS., iii. 118.

one cannot wonder that his followers secured copies of the paper and spread it broadcast throughout England and Ireland, where it did great service amongst "distracted people." *

It may have been this incident, together with the frequent visits and sound advice of Fox himself, which led Cromwell, as one of his last acts, to send down a recommendation to the country justices to show "tendernes towards such poore deluded persons," and to exercise too much lenity rather than too much severity in dealing with persons "whose miscarriages arise rather from defects in their understanding then malice in their wills." †

The Quakers would have been the first to repudiate this lenity. In Boston two years later, when Mary Dyer was hanged and her fellow-prisoners released, they cast back the suggestion of mercy in the face of their judges, and demanded only justice.‡ Cromwell's Quaker subjects were blind to what seemed to him their "defects of understanding," and resented the suffering they endured for conscience' sake under a Government which many of them had fought with their own hands to establish. It is clear that the untimely death of the Protector, and his failure to establish a dynasty, were looked upon by them as the reward of hypocrisy and double dealing. Even the shameful scene enacted at Tyburn in 1660 was used by Fox with full conviction to point the same moral.

"Though O:C: at Dunbar fight had promised to ye Lord yt if hee gave him ye victory over his enmys hee woulde take away tyths etc. or else lett him bee rowled Into his grave with infamy. But when ye Lord had given him victory and hee came to bee cheife hee confirmed ye former lawes. . . . Butt when ye Kinge came in they tooke him uppe and hanged him: and buryed him under Tyburn, where hee was rowled Into his grave

■ Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 327 ; and Sewel, vol. i., p. 331.

† Fox's Journal, vol. i., note on p. 456.

‡ Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 109.

with Infamy. And when I saw him hanginge there I saw his worde Justly come upon him.”*

In common with every other sect, excepting only the Fifth Monarchy Men, the Quakers hailed the Declaration of Breda as the signal for the millennium of religious liberty. Though “Friends did not concern themselves with the outward powers,” it was the Lord Himself who had brought in King Charles, and with pathetic jubilation Fox called upon all men “with hart and voice to praise ye name of ye Lord to whom it doth belong, and over all hath ye suprieme.”†

* Fox’s Journal, vol. i., p. 385.

† *Ibid.*, p. 343.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WOMEN'S MEETING

EARLY in 1659 the remnant of the Rump Parliament, dissolved six years before by Oliver Cromwell, reassembled for a crowded hour of authority. After the disappearance of his son Richard, they declared the Protector's Acts illegal, and seemed disposed with raw haste to settle all the problems which had been left unsolved at his death. The Friends were alive to the opportunity, and encouraged by the freedom granted to some of the prisoners for conscience' sake, they collected 15,000 signatures to a petition against tithes, which was presented to the Parliament in June. The first corporate act of the women of Quakerism was the signing and presenting in the following month of a supplementary petition.*

Their action was unusual, but not unprecedented. In 1641 the same Long Parliament at its first assembling had received a petition from the women of England for the "Redress of Grievances." But the plea which Fox put into the mouths of the petitioners against tithes was as revolutionary as it was unanswerable—"ffor ye Women in ye Truth feeles ye weight as well as ye men." The women themselves seem to have thought that some apology was needed "for the strangeness of their appearing in so public a manner in a matter of so great concernment." The excuses which they gave for their action, if less satisfactory to modern ears than Fox's simple statement, were better calculated to allay the prejudices of Parliament :

* Braithwaite, pp. 456-458.

"This is the work of the Lord at this day," so runs their preamble, "even by weak means to bring to pass his mighty work in the earth . . . choosing the foolish things of the World to confound the wise, weak things to confound the Mighty, vile things and things that are despised hath God chosen."

This meek petition was signed by "above seven thousand of the names of the Hand-maids and Daughters of the Lord, and such as feels the oppression of tithes." The first to sign was Margaret Fell, and amongst the London women it is interesting to find the name of Mary Sanders, "Olivers wives mayde."

The Rump was turned out in October for the second time in its history, and during the confusion of governments which followed it was vain to press for domestic reform. Fox's summary of the results of the petitions against tithes have a curiously modern sound: "Nothings did these powers in ye thinge."*

Yet this action, if it failed of its direct purpose, had other and more far-reaching consequences. The women of Quakerism had been called together for a common object—they had struck a common blow for liberty, and they never lost the corporate life which had been thus inaugurated. It was probably in the same year of 1659 that the first Women's Meeting arose in London, having for its aim, like the monster petition before it, the supplementing of the work of the men.

In the earliest extant document on discipline Fox had directed that "the necessities of poor, widows, and fatherless should be supplied." The Friends seem indeed to have revived something of the old monastic system of relief, and did not confine their alms to the "deserving," nor to members of their own community.

"Many times," says Fox, writing of a Church meeting in 1660, "there woulde bee two hundred beggars of ye worlde there, for all ye country knewe wee mett about ye poore, which after ye meetinge was donne freinds woulde

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 385, and note on p. 468.

sende to ye bakers and give ym each a penny loafe a peice bee ym as many as woulde." *

Burrough and Howgill at their first coming to London had attempted to combine the work of sick-visiting and poor-relief with their almost daily task of preaching. Soon, however, like the primitive apostles, they were compelled to delegate these duties to the lay members of the growing Church. "Just and righteous men" were appointed to meet at stated intervals to care for the poor, to keep records and to settle disputes. This meeting had been held fortnightly for three or four years, when its members recognized in their turn the need of "help-meets for carrying on the service," and with the approval of Fox and other leaders then present in London, the Women's Two-Weeks' Meeting was formed. Some little obscurity surrounds its origin and constitution, but it is probable that its members were chosen by the Men's Meeting, to whom they were henceforth responsible. From them also they derived the money which it was their chief duty to distribute. Regular methods of working were established, and the time and energies of the members were fully employed in the care of ordinary cases of sickness and poverty. After the Restoration, when a storm of persecution broke upon the heads of the Quakers, the Women's Meeting was unable to cope with the overwhelming suffering and destitution which it brought in its train. It was then that one of their own number appealed directly to Fox, and the independent "Box Meeting" was set up.†

In September, 1660, Fox had come to London unattended by a guard, on his own promise to appear for trial before the King's Bench, and was immediately set at liberty by Charles II. His arrival coincided with the outbreak of the Fifth Monarchy Plot, and the persecution of the Quakers which followed mistakenly upon it.

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 356.

† "London Friends' Meetings," pp. 343-350.

Through this pressing danger he remained in London, visiting the Friends who were cast into prison, and drawing up in his moments of leisure two declarations "against all Plotts and Fightings," which cleared them of complicity in Venner's treason. One of these days is memorable, not only as a revelation of Fox's tireless activity, but for its lasting results upon the history of women in Quakerism.

"I was sent for," he writes in his Journal, "to many sicke people: and att one time I was sent for to White Chappell abut three a clocke in ye morninge to a woman yt was dyeinge and her Child and ye people was weepinge about her: and after a while I was moved to speak to ye woman: and shee and her Childe was raised uppe: and she gott uppe to ye astonishment of ye people and her childe alsoe was healed.

"And when I came to Ger: Roberts house about 8 in ye morninge and there came in Sarah Blackbourne (Blackbury) to complaine to mee of ye poore and howe many poore ffrendes was in want: and ye Lord had shewed mee what I should doe in his eternall power and wisdom.

"Soe I spoake to her: to bid about 60 women to meete mee about ye 1st houre in ye afternoone att ye signe of ye helmett att a ffrendes house, and they did soe accordingly: such as were sensible women of ye Lords truth and fearinge God.

"And what ye Lord had opned unto mee I declared unto ym Concerninge there haveinge a meetinge once a weeke every 2 day (*i.e.*, every Monday): yt they might see and enquire Into ye necessity of all ffrendes whoe was sicke and weake and whoe was in wants or widdowes and fatherlesse: in ye Citty and suburbes.

"And soe they blest ye Lord for ye wisdom of God: yt had settled such a meetinge in his power amongst ym."*

With the title of "Box Meeting," these sixty women, selected in the first instance by Sarah Blackbury, undertook the relief of all extraordinary cases of poverty, particularly of those families who were left destitute by the imprisonment of their breadwinner. They were

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., pp. 342, 343.

independent of the Men's Meeting, kept their own records, and rendered account of their disbursements to no outside authority.

The hopes of religious liberty with which the Friends had welcomed the Restoration were revived about this time through an interview granted by the King to Hubberthorne, the successor to Nayler's work in the capital. Charles gave his Quaker visitor "the word of a king" that "you shall none of you suffer for your Opinions on Religion, so long as you live peaceably." With amazing versatility, he discoursed with him on the peculiarities of Quaker doctrine, particularly on its attitude toward the Sacraments. Hubberthorne explained that in their view the Church itself was the one and living bread, "for we are all partakers of this one bread." Whereupon one of the King's friends remarked: "If they are the bread, then they must be broken," the one true word spoken on the King's side that day, and spoken in jest.*

Under the Clarendon Code the "breaking and subduing" of the Quakers became the recognized Government policy. The expulsion of clergymen of the Church of England from their livings, under the Act of Uniformity, has overshadowed the sufferings of humbler sects at the same period. Yet the persecution of Quakers in 1662 was undertaken on a scale and with a malignity which cannot be paralleled in the annals of the Established Church. It affected not the leaders alone, as in the case of Church of England, but the humblest members, men, women, and even children.

In this year 500 Quakers were in prison in London and the suburbs. Their lot, hard as it was, was preferable to that of the loyal Friends who still remained outside the bars. The raiding of Meeting-Houses became the licensed pastime of the trained bands, encouraged in their beating and bruising of the passive congregation by their own officers, and frequently by the Mayor of London

* Hubberthorne's Works. London, 1663.

himself. Political motives inflamed the zeal of the persecutors, who were anxious to atone for past disloyalty and to commend themselves to the Government by their rigour against a non-conforming sect. The absolute futility of violence and even murder as agents for the conversion of the Quakers soon became patent to the lookers-on at this strange drama. No more baffling riddle could have been propounded in the days of the Restoration than the spectacle of a whole community facing death for conscience' sake, and the explanations which naturally offered themselves only served to deepen the mystery. Burrough on his mission to Ireland had been threatened with deportation to Barbados "as a witch." Fox's own influence upon his hearers was frequently set down to his possession of supernatural powers. On his first visit to Oliver Cromwell he had been irritated by a rumour started by one of the Court "priests," that he gained his followers by hanging

"ribans one peoples armes which made ym to followe mee: which," says Fox, "was another of his lyes: for I never woare nor used ribans in my life."*

An echo of the Commonwealth gossip survives in Pepys' Diary, when in this year of life and death struggle he was entertained in the Coffee House by "some simple discourse about Quakers being charmed by a string about their wrists."† Their principles were as little understood as their conduct. A few months earlier, in August, the same diarist reports, apparently without scepticism, a story current on 'Change of an attempt made by some Quakers to blow up the prison in Southwark, where they were confined for nine weeks before being brought before the Sessions.‡

It was at this period that the Friends, recognizing the

* Fox's Journal, vol. i., p. 169.

† The Diary of Samuel Pepys, p. 244. Routledge, 1906.

‡ *Ibid* p. 151.

increasing importance of prison-relief, put this department of the work of the Women's Meeting upon a separate basis, by the appointment of overseers to the various gaols of London. A document of slightly later date, found in the Minutes of the Devonshire House Meeting, is interesting in this connection.

"At a meeting the 18th day of the 7th month 1671 at Devonshire House, these persons following were appointed to take and to gather up all the sufferings of Freinds in all the Prisons in and about the Cittyes of London and Westminster, Burrough of Southwarke and County of Middlesex, and to keep an Account of all Examples that come upon Persecutors in ye said Cittys and County: and alsoe to see that all the Prisoners in the respective prisons in and about the said Cittie who suffer for Truths sake bee carefully provided for with such things as are necessary for them in case they stand in need."

Elizabeth Hooton is one of those chosen for the oversight of the Fleet; Ann Whitehead, formerly Downer, of the Two Compters, Ludgate, and Ann Travers, of Southwark.

The appointment was full of peril at a time when "Examples" showed a perverse tendency to "come upon" the Quaker rather than the persecutor, and intercession on behalf of wife or friend resulted almost invariably in the petitioner's imprisonment. Rebecca Travers, the friend of Nayler, was one of many who suffered on this account. During the summer of 1662 the Tower, in common with every London prison, was full of Quaker captives, and Rebecca, as Sewel records, going to the Lieutenant, "desired him to have compassion on some who were imprisoned for frequenting of meetings." Her reception was rough and discouraging, and as she passed out one of the keepers jeered at her with foul words. Sewel in his preface describes the bold reproof of their enemies as "a peculiar talent of pious men" of all ages. It was a sign of piety frequently shown by the Quakers. Rebecca lingered in the Tower gateway to

exhort the keeper "to be good in his place whilst it was the Lord's will he had it." The man went immediately to the Lieutenant and, with a strange exaggeration of his own official importance, accused the Quaker visitor of treason. She was apprehended and sent to join her friends in the Tower.*

Ann Travers, who was one of the overseers appointed to the White Lyon Prison at Southwark, seems to have been unrelated to her namesake Rebecca. She was a widow of property, and appears, from the mention of her "work-folks," to have carried on some sort of business. Ten years later she was keeping a boarding-school at Chiswick, a district famed even before the days of Miss Pinkerton for its "Young Ladies' Academies," and to her care little Nanny Rous, Margaret Fell's granddaughter, was sent as a pupil. But it is through her connection with the Bridewell Prison in this year of 1662, and her consequent friendship with Thomas Ellwood, that the name of Ann Travers is specially memorable.

Ellwood, a young man of twenty-two, and a Quaker of three years' standing, had come up in this year to read Latin with John Milton, whom he describes as

"a Gentleman of Great Note for Learning throughout the Learned World, for the accurate Pieces he had written on various Subjects and Occasions."

Ellwood had already suffered imprisonment at Oxford under suspicion of complicity with the Fifth Monarchy Plot, and the time of his arrival in the capital was one of equal peril to the Quaker Church. Scarcely had he taken up his work in Jewen Street with the blind poet than he was arrested with the whole congregation at the Bull and Mouth, and committed to Bridewell. His account of this episode is marked by the pleasant candour and picturesque phrasing, which, with the absence of rhyme, distinguish his prose from his poetic works.

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 6.

After describing how on that one black day, October 26, 1662, "a general storm lighted upon our meetings," he tells how the women, still uncaptured, ran about from prison to prison to find their relatives or their servants, and provide them with what they required. This task was rendered easier by the "excellent order" which was found amongst Friends, by which each prison was under the care of appointed overseers, both men and women.

"This prison of Bridewell," Elwood writes, "was under the care of two honest, grave, discreet, and motherly Women, whose Names were Anne Merrick . . . and Anne Travers, Widows both. They, so soon as they understood that there were Friends brought into that Prison, provided some hot Victuals, Meat and Broth (for the Weather was cold), and ordering their Servants to bring it them, with Bread, Cheese, and Beer, came themselves also with it, and having placed it on a Table, gave Notice to us, that it was provided for all those that had not others to provide for them, or were not able to provide for themselves. And there wanted not among us a competent Number of such Guests."

Ellwood, whose father, a wealthy country gentleman, had practically disowned him for his Quaker principles, had but tenpence in his pocket when he was taken prisoner. He considered, however, that with this modest fortune, he would be

"but an injurious Intruder to that Mess, which was provided for such as, perhaps, had not Two Pence in theirs. Being come to this Resolution," he writes, "I withdrew as far from the Table as I could, and sate down in a quiet Retirement of Mind, till the Repast was over, which was not long: for there were Hands enough at it to make light Work of it."

Soon after their arrival at Bridewell the young men prisoners formed themselves into a club, each placing an equal sum of money in the hands of Ann Travers. This they asked her to lay out for them, and send them in each day "a Mess of hot Meat." They invited Ellwood to

join them, but he excused himself, knowing that in the parlous state of his finances he "must sit down with lower Commons." One is glad to find that his pocket was replenished before the tenpence was quite spent, and that he "durst venture himself into the Club . . . and thenceforward, so long as they continued Prisoners together, he was one of their Mess."*

It was in October that Ellwood, with his companions, was haled away to Bridewell from the Bull and Mouth. In the same month William Ames died at Amsterdam, having been released in July at the point of death from the same prison on the plea of his Dutch citizenship.† Five months before Hubberthorne, protected not at all by the pledged "word of a king," had been carried from the same Meeting to Newgate, where, according to Ellwood's description, he lay amongst the vilest felons in a place which was "in Measure a Type of Hell upon Earth." The one redeeming feature of the absence of prison discipline was the liberty it afforded to the prisoner's friends, and even to the prisoner himself, to come and go. When Hubberthorne fell sick, cooped up as he was through those summer months with six or seven score of his fellow-sufferers, Sarah Blackbury, the inspirer of the Women's Meeting, became his nurse. Her account, written for the benefit of the London Members, gives an unconscious picture of the strength and comfort which she brought to him in his last days.

"The seventh day in the morning he asked for me, and when I came to him he said, This night or to-morrow night I shall depart hence. And the next day in the morning, understanding that he asked for me, I arose and went to him. And, after a while, sitting by him, he put his Arme about mee, and said, Do not seek to hold me, for it is too strait for me, and out of this straitness I must go. So in the evening he left the Body. This I was

* "History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood," p. 126 *et seq.* London, 1906.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 61.

free to give forth, because in the time of his sickness sometimes I kept friends from him, desiring that he might have slept, and hoping that therein he might have been refreshed.'*

A heavier sorrow yet was in store for the Church in London. Edward Burrough, who had been, with Howgill, the first Quaker minister in the capital, spent his strength for many years in preaching and in organizing the society which he had founded. The news of the passing of the Act of Uniformity reached him in Bristol, and he determined at once to return to his flock in London, to suffer and, as he was fully persuaded, to die with them. He, too, was arrested at the Bull and Mouth, and committed to the Old Bailey on his refusal to pay the fine of twenty marks. Here he, too, died towards the end of the year, being still only twenty-eight years of age.

Burrough had been one of Fox's early converts at Kendal, and his dying wish was for one hour of his leader's company, which he believed would have made him well. The news of his death was brought to Fox as he was travelling in Cambridgeshire, and he wrote at once to the bereaved Church an epistle, "for the Staying and Settling of their Minds." Some measure of the grief and consternation which his loss occasioned may be taken from a story given in the Journal by Fox himself:

"There came one from London with a motion to mee after Ed: Burrough was deceased: It beinge a whimsey gott uppe Into her heade: and an Imagination gott Into her heade because Ed: Burrugh was deceased yt wee shoulde bee all taken away: soe ye power of ye Lord risse in mee and I was moved of ye Lord to tell her yt her motion was false and yt shee was deceived and soe sent her home again."†

The love-story of Mary Fisher and William Bayly in Newgate, which lies buried under pages of obsolete matter

* Testimony by Sarah Blackbury in the Introduction to Hubbert's Works. London, 1663.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 9, and note on p. 381.

in that notable mariner's "Wrightings," is a welcome relief from these tragedies. He, too, had come up to London in this year of 1662, and was thrown into prison, in common with every prominent male Friend in the city. The vision that came to him in Newgate is the unmistakable prelude to the marriage which took place on his release. In this instance, as in many others (so great was the self-effacement of these voluminous writers), the study of his dreams is the only certain means of divining, as it were by stealth, his private thoughts and wishes. Fortunately, the diaries and letters of the early Quakers, from Fox downwards, are a storehouse of reminiscent visions, which they were never tired of recording, conscious only of their mystical interpretation, and blind to their autobiographical interest. When a prisoner describes his dream of a "sumptuous palace," supplied with that refinement of luxury, "water carried by lead pipes," he is painting a picture of the New Jerusalem for himself and his contemporaries. But more than by pages of complaint, he helps the modern reader to a realization of the feverish discomfort and squalor endured by the sufferers for conscience' sake.

From William Bayly's vision in Newgate it is easy to reconstruct the past horror of his arrest in the Meeting-House, where death had resulted in more than one instance from the brutal raiding by the trained bands. As the dream passes from terror to peace, one can share with the dreamer in the joy of Mary Fisher's daily visits, who came, as he says, "with the face of an Angel" into that foul and wicked place. Even the matter of her talk is here, and its influence upon Bayly's religious ideals, which up to this time had been concerned exclusively with the conversion of his own country.

Lying in the common prison, he was awakened, as it seemed, by a voice in his ears: "They are resolved at present to seek your final destruction." Whereupon, after the manner of dreams, he harked back to the scene which

may have preceded his capture, and is actually recorded of him by Sewel. A man, "strong, thick and tall," entered the cell, smiting him with a staff, and treading him under foot. In vain the unresisting prisoner cried to the Lord, for his assailant, irritated the more by his prayers, fetched a great axe, and seemed about to cut him in pieces. But, as he wrote in another place, "a suddain stop like a cloud came upon it all." "A Woman with the Face of an Angel" stood between him and the man with the axe. The walls of his cell had faded, and he was gazing upon the glorious vision of a mountain-side, whereon were gathered "men from most nations upon earth, whose Language unknown, but the seed of God in them I saw and understood clearly."*

The marriage of these two most interesting preachers seems to have been ideally happy, interrupted though it was by William Bayly's ever-recurring imprisonments. In the intervals of preaching and persecution he still followed his calling of master mariner. He was present to welcome Fox on his pastoral visit to Barbados, and died at sea in 1675 on board the *Samuel*, of London, on his way home from the West Indies.

Mary Fisher seems to have preached and travelled no more after her marriage. She became the mother of three children, and was henceforth a quiet though active member of the London Women's Meeting. In that age of long-winded panegyric, her lament upon her husband's death has the ring of simple conviction :

"I would gladly have died for him," she wrote ; "he departed this Life a Clean, Innocent man, and one who desired the good of all Mankind."

Such scenes of love and death were typical of the everyday experience of the Quaker Church during the years

* "A Collection of the several Wrightings of that True Prophet, Faithful Servant of God and Sufferer for the Testimony of Jesus, William Bayly." 1676.

which followed. As Margaret Fell wrote to the King, "the main business of the Parliament was to invent laws to punish and persecute Quakers." Each more drastic than its predecessor, the Acts of the Clarendon Code continued to fill the English prisons, and culminated in 1664 in the Act of Banishment. The period of persecution coincided with a period of disaster and disgrace for the nation at large. The humiliations of the Dutch war, which ended in the burning of the English ships within sight of the capital, the Great Plague and the Great Fire, and the black bargain with France—these in the eyes of the Quakers were but signs of God's judgment upon a persecuting people.

Yet, as will happen, disconcerting flaws appeared in the theory of retribution. Solomon Eccles had foretold the Plague, and his wife was one of the first to be carried in their new dead-cart to the Quakers' burial-ground.* In common with their persecutors, the London Quakers were stripped by the Fire of their goods and their houses. They lost the Meeting-House at the Bull and Mouth, whose services had been kept up through eleven years at the bitter cost of blood and imprisonment. Their most honoured leaders were taken from them by death, while false teachers, with Perrot at their head, were troubling their peace, and disturbing their faith in Fox himself.

The day before the outbreak of the Great Fire Fox had been released with broken health from his imprisonment in Scarborough Castle. Almost too weak to mount his horse, he came up to London, "to comfort and settle" his sorely tried followers.† It was characteristic that he should meet the situation of complicated difficulty with practical measures. His first task was to check the internal schism, and to this end he appointed a solemn meeting in London,

* Works of Daniel Defoe (Journal of the Plague in London), p. 517. Edinburgh, 1871.

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 110.

“for a Travel in Spirit,” as Ellwood puts it, “on behalf of those who had thus gone out that they might rightly return and be sensibly received into the Unity of the Body again.”

The disorder was checked by the flight of Perrot to America, and the repentance and open confession of many of his disciples. Fox then set himself by a stricter order of discipline to prevent its recurrence.*

The institution of five Monthly Meetings of men and women in the city of London dates from this winter of 1666, and was followed by the ordering of similar monthly and quarterly meetings throughout the country, which Fox himself travelled up and down to establish. The great and simultaneous expansion in the work of the women of Quakerism which resulted from these provincial Meetings causes Sewel mistakenly to date the origin of the London Women's Meeting from the year of the Plague.† The work to which Quaker women throughout England were now summoned by their leader had been the daily task of the London women for nearly seven years. It had been anticipated on a small scale more than half a century before by the English Church of Separatists in Amsterdam. As early as 1596 this community supported a deaconess, whose duties corresponded with those now voluntarily undertaken by the women of Quakerism. She visited the sick and weak, calling out girls and women of the Church to watch by them in case of need. She collected relief for them from those who could spare it, or acquainted the deacons with their necessities. “She was obeyed as a Mother in Israel and an officer of Christ.”‡

The institution of these Meetings aroused fierce opposition in the country, led by men who had been accustomed from the earliest times to the ministrations of

* Ellwood, p. 208.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 210.

‡ “Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth,” p. 63.

the women preachers. The campaign, as Fox did not hesitate to remind his hearers, was carried on chiefly by arm-chair critics :

“The greatest opposers of this practice and work will be and are such as have been convinced of God’s truth but have not lived in it.”

Their arguments were as time-honoured in the seventeenth century as they are familiar to-day. St. Paul then, as now, was the authority quoted for the subordination of women, and their duty to remain at home was upheld by those who had themselves been witnesses of their usefulness in the prisons or the homes of the poor. Fox dealt with these obstructionists in a passage, incoherent perhaps, through indignation, but full of sarcastic humour :

“These that are against ye womens meetings . . . that they see noe service for them: then they may hold their tongues, and not oppose them that do see the service. If they be blind and without sight, . . . there is none imposes anything upon them: for God never received the blind for a sacrifice, neither can his people. For if they have no service for God in these meetings, they may lay by their firesides and wash their dishes: as some of them have said, that they are fit for little else. And therefore all you, that feeble the power of God and your service for God, as aforesaid, in them, you, men and women, keep your meetings in the power of God.” *

The women, made conscious of their own shortcomings by the general opposition, seem to have taken up their duties with a good deal of diffidence. Fox’s theory of equality between man and woman, which lay at the root of his establishment of the Women’s Meetings, was too bold a doctrine to be widely accepted by either. “We are in much Unity with our Brethren,” so the women of the Bristol Meeting wrote to their sisters in London, “and in subjection of mind unto them in the Lord.” The Irish tribute to their usefulness is less tactful than might

* Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 11.

be expected from that nation : " Even Women, and some men of weak capacities are dignified with the Gifts of the Holy Ghost." ■ It is clear that the Meetings in the provinces looked to the London Meeting as their parent and pattern, while those which were gradually set up " beyond seas " took their instructions from the Mother Country. A pathetic appeal may be quoted from the year 1679 :

" Ordered of our womans meetting in the western branch of Nancimund in Virginia, to be writen and sent to the Womans Meetings in England. We are by the grace of God made willing to submitt in the comly order of the truth, unto every ordenance that is according unto Godlyness, and we could gladly receiv advertisment from you that are anciant, and have been long experianced in the work of the Lord and wisdom of God. But we are a poor and contemptable people, in the esteemation of the World, and have our being, as some say, where the off-scouring of nations do inhabit, and such as are com out of hedges and highways, and such as are accounted not worthy elsewhere to rezide." The epistle concludes with a desire " that you would have us in remembrance when you meet together before the Lord." †

To meet such appeals, a valuable and most interesting epistle was written in 1674

" from the Women Friends in London to the Women Friends in the Country, also elsewhere, about the service of a Women's Meeting."

It gives a clear picture of the development of their activities in the years when the care of the prisoners no longer absorbed their energies and leisure. It is signed amongst others by Ann Travers, the friend of Ellwood, and Ann Whitehead, formerly Ann Downer, who twenty years previously had travelled to Launceston to be helpful to Fox in his imprisonment.

■ Rutty's " History of . . . the Quakers in Ireland," p. 470. Dublin, 1751.

† Swarthmoor Transcripts, vol. v., p. 33.

“Dear Friends and Sisters. . . By his arm of power we were gathered to be a meeting to the praise of his grace, distinct (as we may say in some respects), yet in perfect unity with our brethren. We being in that humility and subjection of spirit to the Lord, and therein preferring them (our brethren) shuts out all usurpation and the spirit of it. So that we in a sincere mind, are workers together with them in the same faith: only distinct as to the place and in those particular things which most properly appertain to us as women. . . . Dear sisters, we are stirred in spirit through the love of God, for your information and encouragement as to what our services are, and to stir up you also unto diligence to yours. . . . (These services) have been and are: to visit the sick and the prisoners that suffer for the testimony of Jesus . . . to see they are supplied with things needful: and relieving the poor, making provision for the needy, aged and weak, that are incapable of work: a due consideration for the widows, and care taken of the fatherless children and poor orphans (according to their capacities) for their education and bringing up in good nurture and in the fear of the Lord: and putting them out to trades in the wholesome order of the creation. Also the elder women exhorting the younger in all sobriety, modesty in apparel, and subjection to Truth: and if any should be led aside by the temptations of Satan, endeavouring to reclaim such: and to stop tattlers and false reports and all such things as tend to division amongst us: following those things which make for peace reconciliation and union. Also admonishing such maids and widows as may be in danger through the snare of the enemy, either to marry with unbelievers, or to go to the priest to be married, or otherwise to bring a reproach or scandal upon Truth or Friends.

“And that maid servants that profess Truth and want places, be orderly disposed of, and settled in their services: and likewise that the savoury life and good order of Truth be minded between mistresses and their maids. For these things we have a care upon us: and that we may answer our duty herein, we meet every Second day, to communicate each to the other, from our several places, the several necessities and other services: that none may stand idle . . . for our services still increase many ways: but chiefly our work is, to help the helpless in all cases, according to our abilities.

"Although more especially our provision is set apart for the supply of the household of faith and family of God, yet we cannot be limited : but as the universal bounty of the Lord maketh his sun to rise on the good and bad, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust : so the same bounty, according to its measure in us, oftentimes finds the same object of charity, which (we) cannot, as we find freedom, send empty away. . . . The Lord of all grace, power and peace be with you and us in all our services, to his glory and dominion, whose right it alone is to reign in righteousness for ever. Farewell."*

One can trace in these early documents a tendency to depute to the Women's Meeting such matters as required patient investigation or delicacy of handling. A "Woman's Paper for Order," issued by the London Women, and signed amongst others by Rebecca Travers, is preserved in manuscript amongst the minutes of their Meeting. From this it appears that the members were entrusted with the task of "searching out reports, surmises, and backbiting." They were to trace gossip to its source, endeavouring to fix the blame upon the right shoulders ; then, so ran their instructions :

"when anything is once condemned and judged, let it not be raised up again, but keep it in ye grave, and raise not up ye dead out of ye grave any more."

Another responsibility rather curiously deputed to them was the oversight "of all such as goes to sea, seamen, merchants, masters of ships, and passengers out and home that professes the truth." If these were accused of having "anyways dishonoured the Lord God, or brought an evil report either in their trading or lives or conversations upon the Truth,"

they were to be summoned before a committee of women, which had the power, having "searched into the bottom," either to condemn or exonerate.

* Quoted from "Letters of Early Friends," by A. R. Barclay, p. 343. London, 1841.

Not only so, but the conduct of Quaker emigrants was to be under the strict supervision of the London Women's Meeting.

"All them that has gone from England and dishonoured God beyond sea, these persons following to write over sea to search and know the ground of the matter, that all obstructions that has hindered the glory of God and the spreading his truth, that all may be taken away. . . . If any one hath done anything to dishonour truth beyond sea, let them come to judgment and condemnation, and give forth papers of the same, that the papers may be sent to the world if the world know it. . . . And if they will not write their own condemnations, then friends must write and deny them, and take it out of the mouths of the world."

This provision opened up another line of activity to the most versatile of Meetings. The first work of the Quaker women in London had been the distribution of pamphlets and the crying of papers about the streets. In this later stage of development they were themselves infected by the itch for publication, and papers of condemnation, or warnings on topical subjects written by women of the London Meeting, help considerably to swell the mass of unreadable literature which has survived from this period.

Ann Downer, now the wife of George Whitehead, took the lead, thanks to her superior education, in this as in other service. Her flowery copperplate covers several folio pages with

"a few Words as a Testimony in Detecting Ann Docwry's lying Paper which she falsely Titles A Brief Discovery of the Enimies of Sion's Peace," etc.,

a "Discovery" which reveals itself to the painstaking student as the attack of a Ranter upon the authority of Fox, Whitehead, and Ellwood. The women's pens were employed also on less controversial ground. As one by one the pioneers were called away by death, those who were left delighted to honour their memory with "Testi-

monies," Rebecca Travers particularly showing a tendency to lapse into rhyme on these melancholy occasions.

Fox so far agreed with the doctrine that the women's place was in the home that he deputed to them the investigations which were the necessary preliminary to marriage :

"All marriages to be laid first to the women, yt if ye women might know anything by ye women, yt it might be stopt there, and never come so far as the men."*

It was to them also that he entrusted the oversight of servants, apprentices, and children.

"Further concerning ye Women's Meeting," he wrote in 1673 to the members at Devonshire House, "you may be serviceable among yr Children and Servants, to train them upp in the ffeare of God . . . and to see that they walk as becomes the Gospell: you may be the making or the spoyling of your children: for you women are more in the ffamilies than the men."

The "character" sent up with a servant-girl to the London Women's Meeting from the Meeting at Kendal shows this branch of activity at work. It is dated March 5, 1675, and signed, amongst others, by Ann Camm, formerly the "prating" wife of John Audland, and now married to a young husband, Thomas Camm, the son of her first husband's friend.

"ffriends and beloved Sisters in the Truth, here is a young maide, one of Kendall Meeting: her parents is good antient ffreinds and hath alwayes been esteemed faithfull: and the maide hath been well brought up with work acording to our countrie fashion, and we look upon her to be a well disposed maid. Therefore this is to desire you to take some care of her to help her to some conveynient place. The maiden's name is July Sanse—she is the bearer hereof: her brother Samuel Sanse comes with her, but we hope that Gerrade Roberts will take care of him."

* Bristol MSS., v. 8.

Such was the response which the women of Quakerism made to Fox's appeal, proving themselves, as he hoped,

"serviceable in their generation and in the creation. Now the practick part is called for," so he had encouraged their humility, "for people must not be always talking and hearing."

By this "practick part," even more than by their eloquence and their dutiful presence at meetings, they proved their loyalty to the Master who had called them, through Fox, to this service.

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took Me in : naked, and ye clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me."

CHAPTER XIV

"CONSERVING THE PLAGE"

THE export of troublesome schismatics, ordered in 1664 by the Conventicle Act, was no new idea in English policy, nor the original expedient of Charles's counsellors. The Act itself, as described in its preamble, was the revival of a statute directed in 1593 against the Non-conformists, which had proposed, under penalty of banishment, "to restrain the queens majesties subjects in their due obedience." Four years later, in 1597, a "humble suit" was presented to Queen Elizabeth by three merchant traders, who wished to form a settlement in the island of Rainea, off Newfoundland. Quick to seize their advantage in the new Act, they asked leave

"to transport out of this realm divers artificers and others, people that are noted to be sectaries, whose minds are continually in an ecclesiastical ferment."

As a result of this ingeniously worded petition, four Separatists were unwilling sharers in the voyage which followed—a disastrous voyage which carried them no farther than Amsterdam, where they helped no doubt to swell the "ecclesiastical ferment" of that already distracted city.*

Yet Clarendon's Act of Banishment, if it had precedent to back it, proved to be one of the most unpopular of his laws, and the hardest of execution. In most of the English towns the conscience of the judge rebelled against

■ "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," by Robert Barclay, p. 51. London, 1876.

the unjust penalty, and he exercised his discretion to keep it in abeyance. In London and Bristol, however, the civic power was in the hands of men whose ambition and life-work was to exterminate the Quakers. The Mayor of Bristol had been concerned as a member of Parliament in the passing of the Act, and wept for joy when it became law. Although in that month of July his term of office had but three months to run, he boasted that he “hoped to send 400 Quakers out of the land” before he resigned it.

Two hundred and nineteen persons belonging to the Bristol Meeting were thrown into prison. The fifty-five women prisoners, amongst whom was old Barbara Blaugdone, were crowded into one room of the Bridewell, where were only four or five beds. Thirty or forty must needs lie on the bare boards, a position sometimes chosen deliberately by the prisoners on account of the slight current of fresh air which came in beneath the door. Besse's chronicler, goaded to one of his rare comments, remarks that “this was very hard to women of substance and credit, accustomed to live neatly,” and it was not long before three young women had died in prison of the close confinement and the unsanitary conditions.*

Some extracts from a tenderly worded letter written to the sufferers by Margaret Fell, herself a prisoner in Lancaster, help one to realize the spirit of a people who were judged unworthy to live in their native land: “To all Friends, Prisoners at London and Bristol and elsewhere, in 1664, in the Time of the Act of Banishment.”

“My dearly Beloved, in the entirest Love, be Strong in the Mighty God, and nothing terrified with your adversaries . . . nor with their Laws and Threats of Banishment. For they cannot banish you from the Coasts and Sanctuary of the Living God . . . so that the Destroyer cannot come here to tread: so here you are safe in a quiet Habitation, where the Presence of the Lord God is, and

* Besse, vol. i., p. 52.

his Covenant reaches, and his Salvation to the Ends of the Earth."*

Even when a weary judge had welcomed the Act as likely to rid him of a recurrent trouble, and had bullied his jury, not always successfully, into finding the required verdict, the sentence would be made of no effect by the refusal of "shipmasters" to carry their fellow-countrymen into slavery. Time and again, when a Captain had accepted the commission, his heart failed him after leaving the harbour, and he set his Quaker passengers ashore, with a certificate exonerating them from all share in their release. One of these documents, signed by the Captain of the *Mary Fortune*, of Bristol, and seven of his crew, is quoted in part by Sewel, in its compound of English Law and Christian Gospel the most curious round-robin ever composed by a ship-load of British sailors.†

The Government attempted to counter this resistance with a new bye-law, which required every ship leaving the Thames to carry a pass from the Admiralty. This pass was only granted to a Captain bound for the West Indies on his promise to carry a certain number of Quakers into slavery.‡

Meanwhile the Great Plague, which had been hovering since December on the outskirts of London, broke out within the walls, showing itself first, as no one could fail to remark, in the house of Bearbinder Lane, next door to that lately occupied by the first Quaker convict, Edward Brush. In April Judge Hide, who had been very active in sentencing the Quakers, was found dead in his chamber. Disquieting theories of divine wrath and punishment grew so rife as to reach the ears of Charles II., who disposed of them with his usual relentless logic. The parallel between the plagues of Egypt and the Plague of London was scarcely tenable, when one had ascertained that the

* Works of Margaret Fell, p. 299. London, 1710.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 154.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 185 *et seq.*

mortality amongst the persecuted Quakers was at least equal to that in any other section of the community. Before long the terror-stricken citizens, clutching at any hope of relief, had spread abroad the rumour "that the only means to stop the pestilence was to send the Quakers out of the land."

At this point a certain Captain Fudge came forward. "Lying Fudge," as he was called, who "would not stick to transport his nearest relations." His ship, the *Black Eagle*, was anchored at Bugby's Hole, beyond Greenwich—never surely was a true history so fitly furnished with names!* On July 20 the first batch of Quaker prisoners, men and women, who had been sentenced to banishment, was taken from Newgate down to the water's edge, and conveyed in barges to the *Black Eagle*. When the word was given to embark, the prisoners with one accord refused to obey it, looking upon obedience as a tacit acknowledgment of the justice of their sentence. The turnkeys then called upon the ship's crew to assist them, but they also refused to a man to put a hand to the hateful work, in spite of the veiled threat conveyed in the description of the prisoners as "the King's Goods." The summer evening wore away in menace and altercation. Four of the prisoners were hoisted on board with ropes and tackle; then, night coming on, the remaining fifty, of whom eighteen were women, returned under escort to Newgate.

The plague had now entered the prison—

"a merciful visitation," writes Besse's chronicler, "to the faithful and conscientious prisoners, in releasing many of them from a life worse than death, in the nasty holes of Newgate, where two and fifty of them died."

Amongst this number was a child of fifteen, Hannah Trigg, condemned into slavery, in company with three other girls, in defiance of the law, which forbade the

* Besse, vol. i., p. 406.

prosecution of Nonconformists under sixteen years of age. When the young girl fell sick and died in Newgate, her body, by a refinement of cruelty, was denied to her family, and found a grave in the Felons' Burying-Ground.*

Anne Blow is singled out by Sewel from the other women destined to the hold of the *Black Eagle* for her bold words to the judge who sentenced her. Judge Windham seems to have been visited by a twinge of compassion, and told his prisoner :

“ ‘ Anne Blow, I would shew you as much favour as the Court will allow you, if you will say that you will go no more to that seditious meeting.’ To which she answered, ‘ Wouldest thou have me sin against that of God in my own conscience? If I were set at liberty today, if the Lord required it of me, I should go to the Bull and Mouth tomorrow.’ ”†

Four married women, taken at the Meeting, escaped with eleven months' imprisonment in Bridewell.

While death thinned the ranks of the prisoners, fresh victims were continually supplied by the raiding of the Meeting-Houses.

“ In the height of the contagion,” as Besse's chronicler records, “ the soldiers carried away thirty-two of them to Newgate, as sheep for the slaughter, there being no human probability of their coming out alive.”

On August 4 another attempt was made to convey the convict Quakers to the ship. This time two boat-loads of soldiers from the Tower followed the barges, and a little company of the prisoners' friends swelled the sad procession, rowing along by their side in hired boats, regardless of the soldiers' threats to sink them if they would not be gone. Once more the seamen refused to obey the turnkeys' orders, whereupon the soldiers laid hold of their passive charges, and in an hour the brutal task was done. “ With kicks, heaves and punches,” the Quakers were

* Besse, vol. i., p. 399.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 184.

hoisted on board like bales of merchandise. The men prisoners were packed so tightly between decks that they could not stand upright, and this in time of pestilence, when the people of London were dying at the rate of 8,000 in a week. The *Black Eagle* had made up her complement of cargo, but Fudge, the Captain, was in prison for debt, and for seven months she lingered in the river, "a gazing-stock to those ships that passed by."

Through those stifling months of summer, the Thames, with its silent wharves and forests of idle masts, lay like a dead river, watering a city of death. Trade with foreign countries was at a standstill; homeward bound vessels, not daring to venture themselves in the city docks, lay "a very great fleet" below Gravesend. Hundreds of merchant ships, the refuge of families flying from the plague, rode in couples down the whole length of the river.* Here, too, below Gravesend, were stationed the five ships chartered by Evelyn for 3,000 Dutch prisoners, taken in the naval war. In October the Quakers may have watched from the deck of the *Black Eagle* the disembarking of 500 of these Dutchmen at Gravesend, under Evelyn's supervision, and the beginning of their march through the plague-stricken country to Leeds Castle.†

The Quaker captives, however, would have small leisure or heart for outward distractions. For six months of the year the citizens' choice of the river as a refuge from the plague had been justified by the exemption enjoyed not only by the ships themselves, but by the whole district lying along the waterside. But in July the infection had spread to Wapping and Limehouse, raging more fiercely in the crowded houses to which hundreds from other parts of London had fled for safety. Watermen died alone in their wherries, and lay undiscovered and unburied along the wharves. From the contagion of corpses floating in the river, or through the careless

* Defoe, p. 512.

† Evelyn, pp. 276, 277.

coming and going of messengers, before the month was out the pestilence had travelled to the vessels in mid-Thames, and to the innumerable "hoys, smacks, lighters, and fishing-boats," in which the poorer people had taken sanctuary.* In November Ellis Hookes reported to Margaret Fell the death of nineteen "in the shipp (which yett remaines where it did)". Of this number four only were women,† a fact which may be in part accounted for by the better accommodation which they enjoyed, but may nevertheless be fairly cited as proof of their superior vitality and power of endurance. When in February the owners of the *Black Eagle* put in another shipmaster, one Peter Love by name, only twenty-seven Quaker prisoners remained of the fifty-four who had embarked in the summer.

"The master," says Fox in his Journal, "kept ffreindes under deckes though ye sicknesse was amongst ym, and many dyed of it: and hee lost most of his seamen also with ye plague: and lay for several months Crost with contrary windes though other shippes past out and went there voyages: and att last hee arrived in ye sounde att Plymouth: and there ye governor and magistrates would not suffer him, nor none of his men to come a shoare: though hee wanted many necessaryes for his voyage: but freindes went to ye shippes syde and carryed necessaryes to ye shippe for freindes . . . and soe ye master beinge sore crost and plagued and vext: hee cursed ym yt putt him upon this fright: and hopet hee shoulde not goe farr before hee was taken."‡

Indeed, the Plague Ship, as she was called, was not destined to reach the West Indies. Off Land's End she was taken by a Dutch privateer, whose treatment of the Quaker prisoners, thus doubly captive, "was exceeding bad, the first night we were taken: which can hardly be expressed," so one of them puts it, "by reason of our women"—a piece of delicacy somewhat superfluous, one

* Defoe, p. 481.

† Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 121.

‡ Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 91.

would think, considering the sex of one-third of his fellow-sufferers.

After sailing round Ireland and Scotland to avoid recapture, the privateer landed at Horn, in Holland. The *Black Eagle*, separated from her captor, and beaten out of her course by a great storm, put into Bergen, in Norway. Here she seems to have stayed for some days, the Quakers seizing the opportunity to distribute their pamphlets amongst the visitors from the mainland, whose curiosity was undeterred by the manifest peril of contagion. The women were even granted liberty to go on shore, but "had not freedom" to accept it, not wishing to enjoy privileges which were refused to their brethren. When at last they rejoined their comrades at Horn, they were all kept in prison, the Commissioners of the Admiralty hoping to effect an exchange with Dutch prisoners of war in England. The English Government, however, was not eager to buy back its banished schismatics, and after some fruitless haggling, they were unconditionally set free. Helped with money and clothes by the Friends in Amsterdam, they returned with what Fox calls "a lett passe and certificate" to their native country.*

Banishment was not the worst fate which could befall an Englishman in that year of 1665, when flight was the only preventive known against the plague. The very sailors who had been kidnapped for the Dutch war, returning in the autumn to the half-empty city, found themselves perhaps the only survivors of their families,† and openly expressed their gratitude for the "happy violence" which had removed them from its reach. The times demanded that rare courage which can face intangible danger and brave day by day an invisible enemy. Following the King's example, many of the

* "Account of the Plague Ship," by Degory Marshall, in Devonshire House Collection; and Sewel, vol. ii., p. 211.

Defoe, p. 520.

London doctors deserted their posts, and clergymen, fleeing to the country, left their flock the ironical consolation of nailing a placard upon their church door: "This pulpit to let."

On the other hand, the Mayor and Aldermen stuck to their posts with a bravery which goes far to atone for their brutality towards the Quakers. "Silent ministers" who had been driven from their pulpits by the Act of Uniformity emerged unchallenged, to take the place of the deserters. For a few months the common peril broke down the barriers between sect and sect. Alone of all public meetings, the religious services were well attended—Dissenters and Churchmen worshipping together.*

Another redeeming feature of this terrible summer was the extraordinary generosity of the rich towards the suffering and those who were thrown out of employment. Great sums were distributed daily under the direction of the Mayor and Aldermen, or by the hands of private donors—£17,800 being given out in one week in the parish of Cripplegate alone. Many "pious ladies," as Defoe records, braved the danger of infection, and themselves went from house to house, relieving the wants of the poor and sick.†

The Friends had learned as an isolated body to face suffering and death. The scanty records of the plague year show that they could play their part as good citizens in the hour of common peril. In no single instance did a Quaker leader desert his post, while three at least of their former ministers returned expressly from the country to share their comrades' danger. The women, led by Ann Downer, were foremost in the distribution of relief sent from the country districts.

Amongst those who came up to London "to comfort and visit and relieve Friends in prison, and the families of those who were sick" were Gilbert Latye, the ex-Court-

* Defoe, p. 518.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 510, 511.

tailor,* and George Whitehead, who was henceforth to be the leader of Quakerism in the capital. Coming up from Surrey on news of the plague, Whitehead lodged through the months of peril with Rebecca Travers at her house in Watling Street. She had lost her husband in the previous year, and had herself served three short terms of imprisonment for attending the Bull and Mouth. Her 'unsuitable great house,' as Ann Downer described it, was always open to the preachers who visited London. As she herself wrote of Fox to his wife Margaret :

"I was never better pleased with my house then when hee was in it, and imployed it for ye service of truth, or any of his." †

During Whitehead's stay, neither his hostess nor any of her household were touched by the plague, though it was his daily task to visit the prisons, which had early been "infected and poisoned." While thus in contact with the sufferers, he gained admission to the *Black Eagle*, and held a service on board for the prisoners sentenced to banishment—a striking instance of the prevailing carelessness of contagion. Evening by evening as he left the house at Watling Street for the service at the Bull and Mouth he carried his night-cap in his pocket, expecting to sleep that night in gaol. ‡

Another leader who stuck to his post was Ellis Hookes, the first Recording Clerk and Registrar of "Sufferings," whose home was with Ann Travers.

His report to Margaret Fell, dated 7th November, 1665, and endorsed "Consarning the Plage," gives a vivid picture of the sufferings of the little community, when persecution had been relaxed but not abandoned during the common peril.

* "Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of Gilbert Latye," p. 62. 1707.

† Swarthmoor MSS., i. 395.

‡ "The Christian Progress of that Ancient Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ, G. Whitehead," pp. 291-301. London, 1725.

"Deare M. ff. My deare love is unto thee and to all thy deare children and ffamily, and Anne Travers deare love is to thee. There 3 been buried out of our ffamily in a months tyme, and her Child has had the distemper, but is recovered againe. Dear Margaret I have been preserved well, but soe as a brand is pluckt out of the fire, soe has the Lord delivered me. For I have often laid downe my head in sorrow and rose as I went to bed, and not slept a wink for the groanes of them yt lay a dyeing. And every morning I counted it a great mercy that the Lord gave me another day. And I was made a strength and a help to poore Anne, who has alsoe been well hitherto.

"They keep us out of our meeting at the bull on ye first and fourth dayes but on ye fifth dayes wee meet within.

"Last first day they carryed Ester Bidle and another woman to prison for speaking in the street, and struck Ester over the face with their halberts. Our meetings are quiet every where else.

"ffriends are generally well, both in prison, in the shipp and at Newgate, and those that are at liberty; and not above 1 a day buried, whereas there used to be 16 or 18 and sometymes 20 in a day burried, for severall weekes it was soe. These are a list of ye names of ym that died in Newgate and in the shipp, which yett remains where it did. Christo: Dickenson who was the gravemaker for ym was the last yt dyed."*

The Quakers had not only their own gravedigger, but, as Defoe relates, they had "a separate burial-ground, and a particular dead-cart to fetch the people from their houses."† Pepys adds a touch of detail to this picture of aloofness by his statement on August 31:

"It is feared that the true number of the dead this week is near 10,000: partly from the poor that cannot be taken notice of, through the greatness of the number, and partly from the Quakers and others that will not have any bell ring for them."‡

* Swarthmoor MSS., iv. 121, quoted in part in "Letters of Early Friends," p. 153. 1841.

† Defoe, p. 517.

‡ Pepys, p. 344.

On December 5 Morgan Watkins, a Friend from Radnorshire, who had escaped unscathed from "several battles with death," was writing to Margaret Fell that "Ye Citty doth begin to fill againe apace." The number of deaths registered by the Quakers in London throughout the year was 1,177, but fresh members were being added daily to fill the gaps which they had made.

"Our meetings," says Watkins in the same letter, "are quiett, save only ye bull and mouth, which is kept out, and they are begining to be very large of strange fases and good honest countanes, yt with exceding hungerings receive ye truth."*

So was ushered in that "Annus Mirabilis," whose terrors were to dim the memory of the Great Plague itself. At the end of 1665 the pestilence, if it had never wholly ceased, was present in less virulent forms. Yet the expectation of further calamity seem to have been widespread. The Protector's reign of righteousness and his victories by land and sea were not so remote that the Court of Charles II., with its wickedness at home and its humiliations abroad, could be tolerated without misgiving. Solomon Eccles, not content with the fulfilment of his prophecy of plague, continued every day to foretell its recurrence, while many other prophets of evil filled the streets with their forebodings of "sorer and severer strokes yet behind." "By those frequent clamours," says Defoe, "we were all kept with some kind of apprehensions constantly upon us."† But the Great Fire was heralded at the eleventh hour by a more specific prophecy.

On Friday, August 31, 1666, George Whitehead, going as usual to the Bull and Mouth, was met by some women Friends with the story of an encounter, which he retails in his memoir with minute fidelity :

"Thomas Ibbott of King Rippon in Hunts," so runs the printed version, "came to London two days before the

* Swarthmoor MSS., i. 129.

† Defoe, p. 519.

fire in great haste, being on a sixth day of the week, and alighted off his horse with his cloaths loose, and very much hasten'd or run through the City towards Whitehall, in such a like posture as many of the inhabitants were forced to flee from the fire, when they had scarce time to put on or fasten their wearing cloaths about them. Such a sign he appeared to be, and foretold his vision he had before, That the City would be laid waste by fire."

"The women friends," Whitehead continues, "gave me a pretty full account of him, how he had been with them that day, and told them of his vision of the Fire and Message to London: and that to them he appeared very zealous and hot in his spirit."

They were indeed strangely cautious in accepting his warning,

"fearing that he was under some Discomposure of Mind, which made them somewhat question or doubt of what he told them."

Whitehead himself, before or after the event, took the view that Ibbott was fitted by temperament to be the recipient of such a revelation:

"His spirit was nearer to the destroying Angels, Ministers of Wrath, and might sooner have a discovery of such an evil than they whose spirits are more meek and gentle, and more settled in Quietness and Peace."*

Two days later his message needed no apologist.

At ten o'clock on the night of August 2, the fire broke out in Pudding Lane, opposite the spot where the Monument now stands. During the three days which followed it destroyed, according to Evelyn's calculation, six-sevenths of the old city; and the Quaker Meeting-House at the Bull and Mouth, no less than the Cathedral Church of St. Paul's and the majority of the city churches, was burnt to the ground. A letter written by Esther Biddle to a certain John Smith, evidently about this period, reveals the spirit in which the Quakers met these recurring calamities:

* Whitehead's "Christian Progress," pp. 314, 315.

“In yt which changeth not doe I tenderly salute thee, desiring thy prosperity in yt which is imutable, and shall remaine when fading man shall have an end. And altho it hath been a day of death and an houre of darknes wherein many have laid downe their heads in endles misery, yet hath ye glorious light shined forth as clear as ye sun at noneday, or as a morning without clouds have we seen our beloved which hath caried us above ye feare of death or ye stroake of ye destroyer. Glory be to his name, and he hath yet left himself a remnant in this dying and fading Citty, which are as lights in the midst of gross darknes, and I beleeeve they will see the darkness expelld before the Lord calls them home. We have heard from Jamaico, and Edward Brush (the first Quaker convict) and the other friend is arrived there, and they have much liberty by the government. . . . It is above three months since our maid and Anthony died. I think here is not now much danger.”*

The Friends indeed enjoyed an unwonted respite from danger, both from plague and persecution, during the years which immediately followed. It is true that the fire had raged most fiercely in the centre of the city, in that area where the first Quakers had opened their doors to Burrough and Howgill. Yet, in their deliverance from the exaction of tithes, these householders found a quaint consolation for the loss of their property. “Such as had no houses were eased from sufferings by the hireling priests.” No further attempt seems to have been made, moreover, to carry out the unpopular Act of Banishment. Edward Brush returned in a year or two, safe and sound, from the plantations, with the wife whom he had married in Jamaica.

It was not until 1670, when a peace had been patched up with the Dutch, and a more seemly London was already rising from the ashes of the old city, that Parliament found leisure again to deal with its pressing social and religious problems by means of the Second Conventicle Act.

* Devonshire House A.R.B. Collection, No. 94.

CHAPTER XV

A STUART AMONG THE QUAKERS

THE autumn of 1688 made shipwreck of the Stuart fortunes, and during the winter months that followed the shores of France and the remoter counties of England were strewn with the wreckage. The Queen, with the infant Prince, had fled to Paris—the home of lost causes for the England of that day. James II., after repeated and ignominious failures, succeeded in reaching the coast of France. Those courtiers who remained faithful to their old master followed him to St. Germain's, or retired to an exile equally complete upon their own estates. Amongst the flotsam and jetsam cast up by this calamity there was no figure so remarkable as that of Jane Stuart, the King's natural daughter. She had spent the thirty-five years of her life at Court, an acknowledged and favourite child. Then, seizing the opportunity of her father's flight, she herself stole away from Whitehall, and travelled alone and on foot through half the counties of England. Towards the end of the summer of 1689 she arrived at Wisbech, then a small market town on the borders of Cambridgeshire. Here, in the disguise of a country-woman, she hired herself to a farmer, and went out into his fields to reap the harvest. From that day, throughout the fifty-three years that remained to her, she lived the life of the poorest peasant, earning her bread on the farm or at the spinning-wheel. She was a faithful member of the Quaker meeting, and was buried, at her own request, in the Friends' burial-ground at Wisbech.

For thirty-three years after her death her memory was

preserved only in oral tradition, and in the suggestive entry in the Friends' Register of Burials :

"J.S. Jane Stuart departed this Life on 12th of 7th mo.
on first day, about 1 o'clock ye 14th aged 88. 1742."

"Supposed to be descended from James 2nd she lived in a cellar in the Old Market, Wisbech—the house has been rebuilt by Chs. Freeman."

But in the year 1775 Jonathan Peckover, the grandfather of Lord Peckover of Wisbech, who was himself a Quaker, took up his residence in the town. At that date many inhabitants who had known Jane Stuart were still living, and from their lips he learnt such details as they could remember of their mysterious neighbour. But it is evident that when she cut herself off from her old life she resolved that the severance should be complete, and it was only by accident that she was ever betrayed into a reference to her former position. If the story which has survived seems meagre, and not always consistent, it should be remembered that it lay for thirty years in the memory of unlettered peasants before it was committed to writing.

There are serious difficulties in the way of accepting this history, but none that are insurmountable. The fact that a daughter of James II. received no title, and was never forced into marriage with a courtier, is not so strange as it at first appears. Charles II. was alone amongst the Kings of Europe in the habit of ennobling his base-born children, and his paternal weakness was a favourite jest with Louis XIV., whose vices he had copied. That great monarch was satisfied to settle a sufficient sum upon each of his children, after which he disclaimed any further responsibility. Yet Charles himself, while showering his favours upon his mistresses and their sons, neglected his daughters by the same mothers. His son by Lucy Walters was created Duke of Monmouth, and treated with such marked favouritism as encouraged him to hope for the kingdom. Lucy's daughter Mary

was allowed to grow up in obscurity, received no title, and successively married two commoners.* But even if James had wished to ennoble his daughter, or to procure her a brilliant marriage, it is unlikely that her Quaker sympathies would have allowed her to consent.

The one serious ground for scepticism lies in the omission of all references to this royal lady, either in Clarendon, Pepys, or Evelyn. This fact would be sufficient to discredit her claim if she had been represented as living habitually in the capital. She is known, however, to have spent much of her girlhood abroad, at the Courts of Germany and Prussia. Moreover, when she was at home, it is obvious that her tastes would not lead her to frequent the theatres and other places of public entertainment, where Pepys loved to criticize and catalogue the ladies of the Court. After her profession of Quakerism, she would cease also to attend the services of the Church of England. Clarendon's silence is capable of another explanation. Clinging, as he did to the end of his life, to an old-fashioned morality, it is conceivable that for his daughter's sake he would wish to ignore the existence of her husband's illegitimate child, the rather that his treatment of the Duke of York throughout his histories is marked by an extraordinary charity and reticence.

Jonathan Peckover lived until 1833. In 1809 the first written memorial of Jane Stuart appeared in the *Friends' Monthly Magazine*, under the heading of "Extracts from the Portfolio of a Man of Letters." This was supplemented, in 1810, by a further account in the same paper, both following in the main the particulars gleaned by Mr. Peckover. I am indebted for this information, and also for some further details, to the kindness of Lord Peckover, who himself can remember his grandfather, and thus forms a link, however slender, with this surprising history.

* Evelyn's Diary, p. 171 (Routledge), and note by William Bray, Esq.

Jane Stuart was born in Paris, in 1654, at the close of one of the darkest years of the royal exile. The young King, Charles II., a fugitive from England since the Battle of Worcester, was living with his mother at the Louvre, a home granted to her by her sister-in-law, the Queen Regent. He had been assigned a pension of 6,000 livres a month by the French Court.* This amount was to have been obtained from a "gabel," or salt-tax, but in point of fact, as Clarendon records with his accustomed vigour of phrasing, it was seldom paid, and never punctually. Out of this chimerical income, Henrietta Maria, who was not the tenderest of mothers, exacted the cost of every meal which her sons ate under her roof, beginning with the first supper after Charles' escape from England. The Duke of York, as we learn from an *Intelligencer*, published in London in 1652, was

"still in high favour, and . . . cried up for the most accomplished gentleman, both in arms and courtesie, that graces the French Court."

In that year, rebelling against his position of idleness and dependence, he had, with great difficulty, obtained his brother's leave to serve with the French Army, which was then engaged upon a war with Spain—a war which had become habitual to the neighbour nations in the seventeenth century.† This ornament of the Court was reduced to borrowing 300 pistoles from a Gascon gentleman, named Gautier, to purchase his military equipment, which could not, even with this assistance, include one led horse in case of need. His welcome to the staff of Marshal Turenne, "with all possible demonstration of respect," must have seemed of pleasant augury to his threadbare fortunes.†

Meanwhile the French Court was itself suffering humili-

* Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," p. 824. Oxford, 1839.

† "Memoirs of the Duke of York, 1652-1658." Edited by A. M. Ramsay, 1735.

ations comparable to those of the exiled English. In 1648 the wars of the "Fronde" had broken out between Parliament and Court. Twice in the succeeding years Louis XIV. and his mother had fled from Paris, leaving Turenne with his army to bring the disloyal city to reason. Charles and his mother, however, for lack of funds, remained unwilling pensioners at the Louvre, while the attitude of the people grew more and more threatening, as the Duke of York, under Turenne, advanced to his brother's relief. The fortunes of the mimic Civil War swayed backwards and forwards—a light French parody of the grim scenes that had lately been enacted across the Channel. It became entangled with the remains of the Spanish War, and the two great leaders, Turenne and Condé, appeared at the head, first of one party, then of another. At last, in 1653, the united troops of Spain and the Parlement were finally routed in the Faubourg St. Antoine by Marshal Turenne, assisted by the Duke of York, who here took his first lesson in the coercion of the people. In 1654 the Parlement was suppressed, never to regain its political power until 1789.

For some months after this decisive fight the Duke of York, still only a youth of twenty-one, lingered idle in Paris, "returned hither," as Chancellor Hyde reports in a letter to Sir Richard Browne, "full of reputation and honour." He heard nothing of the complaints which had assailed his family in his absence, and enjoyed a popularity unshared by his elder brother. A member of the staff of the victorious army of France, he held a position at once more honourable and more lucrative than that of the exiled King of England.*

It was in this year of 1654, that his daughter Jane was born. Her mother's name has never been made public,

* "The Private Correspondence between Sir Edward Hyde, afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and Sir Richard Browne." Edited from the original MSS. at Wotton by William Bray, F.A.S., and appended to Evelyn's Diary.

though she is believed to have been a Maid of Honour to Queen Henrietta Maria, and a Protestant. Such secrecy was very unusual at a time and in a Court in which the royal favours were regarded rather as an honour than an insult. It is probable that the child was the outcome of one of James's broken covenants, and that the rare grace of bearing her father's name was granted as some reparation for the wrong done to her mother. According to the Earl of Sandwich, James had plighted his troth to more than one lady in France, signing the document with his blood, before his intrigue with Anne Hyde culminated in 1660 in a union acknowledged by Church and State.*

About the time of his daughter's birth James rejoined the French Army, and was present with Turenne at the raising of the Siege of Arras. Throughout these intermittent campaigns he distinguished himself for the bravery which was one of his redeeming features—at least in his youth—and gained the affection of the whole army by his affability and winning manners, characteristics which seem to have deserted him with his rise in fortune.

In 1655 Charles also took his longed-for departure from Paris, with the help of Cardinal Richelieu, who feared that his continued presence there might endanger the Treaty with Cromwell, which was then in progress. During the next three years, while his more fortunate brother was carving out his military career, Charles existed from hand to mouth on the charity of neighbouring Courts. But the rulers of Europe were singularly lacking in the spirit of trade unionism, and their subsidies could only be extracted from them, after "proper messages and insinuations" had been sent round by the unhappy Prince.†

In 1658 the Duke of York also was requested to with-

* Pepys' Diary, p. 53. Routledge.

† Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," p. 859.

draw from the kingdom,* the French Court having promised, by a secret article in the Treaty with Cromwell, to harbour neither him nor his brother. Charles was living at Bruges at the expense of the Spanish King, and thither James removed with his whole household, which included his little daughter Jane, now a child of four years old. In the next year, by one of the strange political somersaults characteristic of the time, he was present in the Spanish interests at the Siege of Dunkirk. Here he led a charge against his French comrades-at-arms, who had been reinforced by 6,000 English Puritans, sent over by Cromwell, under the terms of his defensive and offensive alliance. It is curious to read that, even under these circumstances, James remarked with pride on the brave stand made by his fellow-countrymen.

The treaty which was made in the next year between France and Spain deprived the Duke of York of his only employment—the active support of one, no matter which, against the other. An idle life in Brussels, the latest refuge of the exile Court, was not long to be borne. His large establishment could not be maintained without means, and these were no longer forthcoming. In spite of his consistent loyalty to his brother, a misunderstanding had arisen between them, which lasted for several months. His adherents were divided by political intrigue and torn by petty jealousies. They were united only in their hatred of Charles's household, and in their desire to remove to some "land of plenty," where the King and his Court might be left behind them.† Such was the society upon which the consciousness of James's little daughter was beginning to open—a society only less corrupt than the Court of the Restoration because it had some of the restraints of poverty to keep it sweet. It is small wonder that in this time of despair James accepted the offer brought him from Spain by the Marquis of Carraçena, of

* Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion," p. 910.

† *Ibid.*, p. 930.

the sinecure title of "el Admirante del Oceano," and began to look forward with hope to the well-paid and tranquil existence of a Spanish Grandee.*

But this was the darkest hour before the dawn of the Royalist fortunes. In less than six months the Duke of York, as High Admiral of England, was welcoming a deputation from his own fleet, while a deputation from the Parliament had brought him a present of £10,000 to cover the costs of his return to his eager and repentant country. On his arrival in England he was provided with a separate establishment after the French model, on a scale only less magnificent than that of the King himself—a piece of imported extravagance which provoked Clarendon's remonstrances. In all these upheavals little Jane Stuart bore her share as a recognized daughter of the Royal House, and her father was careful to secure a proper provision for her in his own family.

In the following autumn his secret marriage was acknowledged with the daughter of Sir Edward Hyde, the Chancellor, whose loyalty had been newly rewarded by a peerage. Although the King still stood his friend, Lord Clarendon was hated by the courtiers as an economist and a kill-joy, and the *mésalliance* cost the Duke of York his popularity, both with Court and people. Yet his bride brought the leaven of decent middle-class virtues into her husband's household, and it is to her influence that one may trace many of the qualities in Jane Stuart which would be otherwise inexplicable—her passion for independence, her love of learning, and her purity of life. Anne Hyde shared the proud integrity of her father, and his hatred of loose living, and stood aloof from the dissipations and prodigality of the Court at Whitehall. After the ill-management of the Duke's income had drawn a serious expostulation from his Commissioners, the Duchess herself took a seat at the Council table,† cutting

* "Life of the Earl of Clarendon," written by himself, p. 41. Folio.

† Pepys' Diary, p. 608.

down here a price and there a salary. So far as one woman could, she fostered in her own palace a taste for family life and for simple amusements. Pepys has preserved a pretty picture of his unexpected entry into the Duke of York's apartments, where he found his great master and High Admiral seated on a carpet on the floor with the Duchess and her ladies, and playing, "I love my love with an A!"* James, cold-hearted and stubborn as he was by nature, yielded himself to the influence of his wife, whom even Bishop Burnet, who did not love her, describes as "a very extraordinary woman." His attitude exposed him to ridicule at the Court, where friendship and confidence between husband and wife were the most old-fashioned of virtues. The King himself, whose weakness lay in another direction, did not hesitate to jeer at his brother in public, giving him the nickname of "Tom Otter," the typical hen-pecked husband in "Epicene, or the Silent Woman."†

The Duchess, according to Burnet, had "great knowledge, and a lively sense of things," and though James's own studies had been tragically interrupted in his boyhood, he provided his children with an excellent education. His daughter Mary was an eager student of both history and divinity, and wrote most ably in defence of the Protestant religion. She was also an accomplished needlewoman, and would sit at her work for hours with an assiduity to which her ladies had been little accustomed in the former reigns.‡ It is evident that Jane Stuart shared both the talents and the industry of her royal sister.

The story is told how, half a century later, she was discovered, to her own confusion, reading the Greek Testament in her cellar at Wisbech, when her hard day's work was done.

* Pepys' Diary, p. 724.

† *Ibid.*, p. 537.

‡ "The History of his Own Times," by Bishop Burnet, books iv. and v.

In those days of an almost absolute monarchy, access to the King was a practical benefit of real importance to the seeker. Charles II. kept open house to his subjects, and his Palace was the resort of all who sought reward for their past services, or redress for a present grievance. Chief among the religious bodies, the Quakers held a prescriptive right, which they still enjoy, of appearing before the King, and the persecution which they began to suffer under the "Conventicle" and other Acts did not dispose them to be backward in exercising it. Their "Thou" speech, as it was called, and their plain dress crowned by the hat, which they refused to remove on a point of conscience, grew familiar to every habitué of the Court. The Merry Monarch, as Clarendon confesses, was very ready on his part to receive these quaint visitors, "for his divertisement and mirth."* Yet he can scarcely have failed to be impressed by the contrast between the ladies of his Court and the Quaker women who followed him with so much earnestness to plead the cause of their suffering Society. And when, as Pepys relates, the bearer of the petition was as pretty as she was modest, Charles would not disdain "seriously to discourse with her, arguing the truth of his spirit against hers"—a losing battle surely, and fought with unequal weapons.†

Jane Stuart may well have been present at these interviews, which took place, without warning or previous appointment, in the park or on the tennis-court, as well as in the formal Audience Chamber. She had inherited a strong religious bias from her father, and was brought now, for the first time, into touch with a community to whom religion meant something more than a means to a political end. If her sympathy had been aroused by their recital of imprisonments, fines, and tortures, she would have opportunity for inquiring into their doctrines through her father's growing friendship with William Penn, the

* "Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon," p. 149. Folio.

† Pepys' Diary, p. 246.

young son of his favourite Admiral. An old print is preserved at the Friends' Reference Library in Bishopsgate, which represents the interior of the London Meeting-House, at the Bull and Mouth, and the Duke of York, standing with William Penn, amongst the worshipping congregation. Jane Stuart may have owed her first experience of a Quaker meeting to the same introduction.

At this time, too, she began to visit the Continental Courts, where her father, in his youth, had been a familiar guest. She stayed most frequently in Prussia and Germany, where she may have come in contact with the Quaker missionaries, who were beginning to evangelize those countries.* Her father's cousin, the learned Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, was a warm friend to the movement, and the correspondent of Fox and Penn. In 1667 she had been appointed Abbess of the Lutheran Convent of Herwerden, or Herford, in Westphalia, where she proved herself a kind hostess to all travelling Quakers, both men and women.

Moved by one or all of these influences, Jane Stuart joined the despised sect of the Quakers, and openly avowed her "convincement." But the confession did not produce the immediate revolution in her fortunes which she must have expected. James was, perhaps, too conscious of his own disabilities as a Roman Catholic to be intolerant of his daughter's religious choice. The final catastrophe of his disposition was brought about in great measure by his leniency to Dissenters, and his sympathy with the Quakers in particular was marked enough to foster the belief that their preachers were Jesuits in disguise. But during his brother's reign, being himself looked upon with dislike and suspicion, he was powerless to check the persecution which raged most fiercely in its early years, and not even his known friendship for William Penn could save that well-born and courtly Quaker from imprisonment.

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 290.

To this period belongs the story of Jane Stuart's own imprisonment in the company of Ellwood—a story which one is obliged reluctantly to dismiss as a legend. Ellwood was confined in Bridewell and Newgate in 1662, when Jane was a child of eight, and his last imprisonment was at High Wycombe (not in London), when she was still only twelve years of age.* Even in those brutal times a Dissenter under the age of sixteen was not punishable by law.† If it be true that this daughter of the Stuarts suffered in gaol for her religion, it was not in the company of Milton's friend. There is no account of her trial and punishment in the Quaker records, but this is the less to be wondered at, since it is related that she was welcomed back into her father's household on the expiry of her sentence, and resumed her place at the Court of Charles II. without a stain upon her character.

Anne Hyde, the Duchess of York, died in 1671. Her two surviving daughters, afterwards Queen Mary and Queen Anne, remained as long as they lived on friendly terms with their half-sister; and when Mary of Modena, the Duke's second wife, came as a young bride to London, Jane Stuart, now a girl of nineteen, continued to reside at her father's house. Her new stepmother was younger than herself, and this fact, together with her delicate health and her frequent absences with her husband in the country, may explain the extraordinary freedom from restraint which Jane enjoyed at this time.

One other anecdote of her childhood has been preserved, and may be accepted as authentic. It gives a tantalizing glimpse of a love-story, which must have been one of the strangest and most idyllic of her many coloured memories, and even now, dim and broken as it is, preserves some trace of its former beauty. During her life in London Jane gave her heart to a man whose name and

* "History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood," written by his own hand, pp. 146, 204. Headley Brothers, 1906.

† Sewel, vol. ii., p. 156.

station are alike unrecorded, and whose sole surviving feature has been his desire to marry her for her own sake, and his willingness to share with her the obloquy and peril of the life of a Quaker. It seems most likely, however, that he was himself a member of the Society, and that his quaint speech and plain dress had won the love of his mistress above all the glitter of her noble suitors. The marriage was to be celebrated according to the Quaker form, which, after due notice given, was a simple taking of each other by the man and woman before accredited witnesses. When the day came the bride and bridegroom, accompanied only by his brother, set out in a coach for the Meeting-House. Before they could reach it, however, the horses took fright, and the coach overturned—an accident common enough in those days of unmade roads and top-heavy carriages. The bridegroom was killed on the spot, though Jane herself was unhurt, and the brother escaped with a broken leg. The bride did not stay to indulge her grief. She insisted on continuing the journey, and carried the brother to lodgings in London, where his leg might be set with some hope of success. Not content with this service, she stayed with him and nursed him herself until his recovery.

The story is welcome in the midst of a chronicle so disappointingly barren of illustration or of explanatory detail. If we reject the tradition of her imprisonment, the account of her intended marriage is sufficient evidence of the thoroughness with which she had identified herself with the Quakers, and her conduct throughout the adventure gives such proof of her disregard for convention as might prepare us in some degree for her later actions.

In 1685 James II. came to the throne, and his sympathy with all forms of Dissent showed itself immediately in the discouragement of informers, the release of Quaker prisoners, 1,400 of whom were in gaol at his accession, and finally in the Repeal by Declaration of the Penal Laws

against Nonconformists.* His tolerance was received by the nation with a colder welcome than it deserved. Our forefathers were disposed to fear a Roman Catholic, even when he brought gifts, and they suspected the King of a design to establish the Church of Rome, under cover of a general leniency. This motive was undoubtedly present in his mind, but, on the other hand, the influence of his friend William Penn, and of his own Quaker daughter, were sufficient to account for his kindness towards a body of "sectaries" of which they both were members.

The only picture which Jane Stuart has left of these three troubled years is concerned not at all with plots or politics. It is a glimpse of the infant Prince, her brother, afterwards to be known as the "Old Pretender," a little white-headed boy whom she nursed upon her knee. Perhaps this memory was the more vivid because it was the last which remained to her of Court or family life. Prince James was born in May, 1688. His birth was the signal for the Revolution, and before the year was ended the Queen had fled with her baby into France, and James II. was himself in hiding.

Her father's deposition gave Jane Stuart the choice of two courses. She might have followed him into exile, and made one of his diminished train at St. Germain's. She would have been welcomed at Hampton Court amongst the adherents of her sister and William of Orange. But she chose neither alternative. She saw in the Revolution the opportunity which had been offered to her once before by her intended marriage, and resolved to turn her back upon her present life—a life where religion could be cultivated only by a miracle, and where outward show and ceremony consumed the leisure which she had dedicated to the service of God. It was no new thing for a Stuart to count the world well lost for his religion. Charles I. still wears the halo of martyrdom granted him by the Church of England, and if James had been content,

* Sewel, vol. ii., p. 454.

like his brother, to conceal his devotion to the Church of Rome, his descendants might have been sitting to this day upon the throne of their ancestors. But it may be doubted whether any member of the family paid the price as deliberately as this, his Quaker daughter.

Taking no one into her confidence, Jane Stuart stole away from the Court, which then and for many days after was in too great confusion to notice her absence, and in the disguise of a countrywoman she set off alone for the north. Travelling as a poor Quaker, she would meet with little difficulty on her journey. The Friends throughout the country were in the habit of entertaining their travelling preachers, both men and women, and their hospitality to the congregations which assembled to hear these visitors was so unbounded that it was looked on with suspicion by their worldly-minded neighbours as likely to bring them upon the parish rates.* Moreover, thanks to her father's Declaration, the traveller no longer dreaded the report of informers, who in Charles's reign had grown rich by denouncing the Quakers, while the suppression of the Penal Laws against Dissenters saved her from fear of arrest as a "wandering vagabond." Wisbech in the Fen Country was the goal of her journey, a town and neighbourhood of evil omen to her Community. Cambridge-shire has the unenviable distinction of being the county in which Friends were first publicly flogged for their religion.† In 1660 there were eight Quakers confined in Wisbech Gaol, and ten years later there was scarcely a Friend in the county who was not in prison.

Ignorant, perhaps, of its inhospitable reputation, it is likely that Jane Stuart was attracted to Wisbech by its remoteness and obscurity‡—qualities for which it had become a by-word throughout England. Now a thriving

* Sewel, vol. i., p. 141.

† "The First New Persecution." Quaker pamphlet issued in 1654.

‡ "History of Wisbech and the Neighbourhood during the Last Fifty Years, 1848-1898." By Frederic John Gardiner, F.R.H.S. Wisbech, 1898.

municipal borough, it was in the seventeenth century an insignificant market-town in the centre of a grazing and flax-growing district. It is related that a manufacturer of those days, living no farther away than Norwich, preferred to take an extra discount off his goods rather than be responsible for their carriage to so inaccessible a spot. Even at the beginning of the nineteenth century an early copy of Bradshaw includes in its list of "Steam Packets to Foreign Stations" the old *Forager* steamer, which plied between Hull and Wisbech!

But even if Jane's retreat had been easy of access, there was small risk that it would be visited by her old acquaintances. There was little of obvious beauty in that low-lying and treeless land, save the brief glory of the sunset, which now, as then, spreads itself with peculiar splendour round the circle of the unbroken sky-line. The marshlands which surrounded it were the haunt of fever and ague. Thirty years after Jane's death the traveller Dawbarn arrived in this forgotten corner of England. His stay, one may gather, was of the shortest, but the record of his visit is interesting as a guide to her first impressions of the place which was to be her home for the rest of her life. In a book of travels, published in 1772, he writes:

"The country round Wisbech is low, watery, and more dreary than the Lincolnshire Fens, the highland being further removed from the sight, and in consequence the eye, having no prospect of a happier country—no more agreeable place than is immediately before it—becomes satiated with a sameness, which besides being in itself disagreeable, appears to have no end, nor to lead to future enjoyment."*

When Jane Stuart arrived in Wisbech, any small sum which she had brought with her for her journey was exhausted, and she was faced by the unfamiliar problem of earning her own living. She might well have engaged herself as governess in some gentleman's house, but such

* Quoted in Gardiner's "History of Wisbech."

a position would have brought with it the danger of recognition, and she had determined that her humiliation should be as complete as her disguise. It was late summer when she came into the town, and she joined a group of labourers who were standing to be hired beside the Old Bridge, where Wisbech farmers still come to engage their extra workers at hay-time and harvest. In spite of her inexperience, she was sent out with the others to reap in the fields. It is easy to realize how the weight of the sickle would blister her delicate hands, and how, as hour followed hour, the unaccustomed toil would grow almost intolerable. But for once the dogged obstinacy of the Stuarts stood its owner in good stead. Before the summer was over the mysterious stranger had come to be known as the "Queen of the Reapers," a strange title surely for a woman whose sister was even then seated upon the throne of England.

Then the winter drew on, and with it the necessity of finding some other form of labour. Again the friendly country-side suggested an expedient. In July, on her arrival, the fields and cottage-gardens had been gay with home-grown flax—its flowering ranks, closely massed, lying here and there like patches of sky fallen amongst the harvest fields. Now nothing remained of their blue loveliness but the stalks rotting in the ditches, and a smell of unrivalled noisomeness which found its way into every corner of the town. Jane bought a spinning-wheel with the remains of her summer's earnings (it could be purchased for half-a-crown, as we learn from contemporary account-books), and hired a little cellar in the market-place, not far from the Old Cross. Here she span the flax into thread, grateful at last for the hours spent over her wheel in her father's palace, amid the gossip of the Maids-of-Honour. A covered market, or shambles, stood in the square before her door—a quaint building, surrounded by posts, which supported a large room overhead. Outside this covered space planks and trestles were fixed for the market-women, who came into Wisbech from all

the country round, laden with butter and eggs, or with wool and flax of their own spinning.* Here, without awning or shelter, the winter through, Jane Stuart sat amongst the farmers' wives, to sell the thread which she had spun.

At first some effort seems to have been made by her relatives to draw her back to her old life. The friends of the new King, in particular, were anxious to obtain her as a witness to their contention that the infant "Pretender" was a supposititious child, and not the heir to the throne. The Duke of Argyll, in his zeal for King William, succeeded in tracking her to Wisbech, and if he had been content to travel *incognito*, would have had no difficulty in finding her. But from her high seat in the market-place she recognized the familiar arms and livery upon a coach which was drawing up at the inn-door. Hastily packing up her thread, she stole away, and lay in hiding till the search, which she had foreseen, had been abandoned.

When the nine days' wonder of her flight had spent itself, her life took up its quiet tenour, only once to be interrupted in its remaining fifty years. Her neighbours, whose curiosity must have been sorely tried by her reticence, grew to love her for her humility and the beauty of her gentle ways. She was constant in her attendance at the Friends' Meeting-House, and, like her father, was never more happy than in the company of children, to whom, we are told, "she gave suitable religious advice when opportunity offered." She shared one of the most charming of the Stuart characteristics in her great love for birds, keeping many, willing prisoners, in her little cellar.

One other quaint and valueless detail has survived the wreck of her memory. It is recorded that at eighty years of age she grew a complete set of new teeth. This alleged miracle has a certain interest, affording, as it does, one further proof of Jane's likeness to her father.

* Gardiner's "History of Wisbech."

James II., dying at eighty years of age, refused to be buried in French soil, confidently hoping that his descendants would carry his body over to England at their Restoration. An English traveller who viewed his exposed body in Paris some fifty years after his death was so struck with admiration of his white and perfect teeth, that he tried, and failed, to pull one out as a memento for the lady who was his companion! Jane Stuart must have resembled her father in this good fortune, and her own well-preserved teeth given rise to this legend.

In the year 1715 rumours of the Rebellion in Scotland filtered down to Wisbech, and early in 1716 the news came that the Pretender had landed at Peterhead. Jane was now a woman of sixty years of age, bowed with toil in the fields, and unused for more than a quarter of a century to the ways of Courts. Yet so keen were the old memories which this news awakened, that she hired a chaise, and was carried the 300 miles into Scotland to see the "white-headed boy" whom she had held upon her knee—a journey which is in itself sufficient corroboration of his claim to be the son of James II. One wonders whether, if the rising had been successful, her life for its remaining twenty-five years would have resumed its old course. But the Duke of Argyll was already upon the track of the Pretender, and in a few weeks the brother and sister had gone their several ways—she to a willing, and he to an involuntary, exile.

The last scene which has been recorded of Jane Stuart's life is one of the most touching, as it is the best authenticated. Grown very aged and infirm, she fainted one day as she was walking upon the grass in the Friends' graveyard. As she came to herself the peace of that green shade stole into her brain, and, recognizing that her death was at hand, she asked that she might be buried in the place where she had fallen. She had a rowan-tree planted to mark the spot, a tree, as one of her chroniclers has noted, most fitted to guard the resting-place of a daughter

of Scotland. She died on September 12, 1742, on a Sunday morning, and her grave was dug as she had wished. But the Stuart atmosphere of tragi-comedy hangs about her rowan-tree. The last desire of Jane Stuart grew too big for the little graveyard where she had planted it, and its fate was to be cut down and sold for firewood for the sum of twelve shillings.

Yet the grave is not uncared for. Some reverent hand has hedged it round with box, and her initials, with her age and the date of her death, grow in ever-green letters upon it. She lies there under the open sky—a King's daughter, who turned her back on Courts, and earned her bread in the fields by the work of her own hands. Around her lie the Friends whom she chose for her companions in her lifetime—humble Quakers who, like herself, endured the loss of all things for the sake of their religion—and only a low hedge of living green divides her from their undistinguished graves. She was, perhaps, the happiest of all her ill-starred race, for she has left it on record in the only saying of hers that has come down to us, that

“she enjoyed such contentment and peace that she would not leave her cell and spinning-wheel to be the Queen of England.”

CHAPTER XVI

QUAKER WOMEN OF YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

WHEN Fox died on January 13, 1691, he left 50,000 Friends in Great Britain and Ireland, or 1 to every 100 of the population. They were the largest body of Nonconformists in England. In 1800 their number had dwindled to 20,000, and was still decreasing. There are to-day about 18,000 Quakers in England, or 1 to every 2,000 of the population, and 123,500 in the whole world.*

The reasons for decline are not far to seek. Foremost, perhaps, one must place the death of Fox and of his helpers, both men and women, who had carried on the heroic traditions of Quakerism at its rise. While they lived, the boundless horizon which had inspired Mary Fisher, and had drawn Fox himself to America and to Holland, still glimmered, though dimly, before the eyes of their followers. His death marked for more than a century the abandonment of missionary enterprise.

Next to the loss of their leader, the cessation of persecution was the heaviest blow which could have been struck at the Quaker Church. During the forty years of his service suffering and injustice had been its daily portion, directing the outlook and moulding the character of the growing society. The members were united in a common bond of affliction and peril. For the half-hearted believer there was no place in their ranks. The policy of legalized oppression and disproportionate punishment pursued by

* "The Story of Quakerism," p. 251. London, 1908. A short history by Elizabeth Emmott, to whose excellent account of the work of modern Quakerism I am indebted throughout this chapter.

the Government kept alive a flame of rebellion in the hearts of their victims, which broke out here and there in the interruption of "steeple-house" services, and the varied acts of non-acquiescence which are typical of the early history. The Revolution of 1688, when it established liberty of conscience, seems to have abstracted from religion its active element, and the Quakers, as they had been the greatest sufferers, welcomed with more gratitude than any other Nonconformist body their relief from the long agony of persecution. Though the injustice of tithes was felt as heavily as before, there was no more open revolt against the "greedy hireling priests," who were left to conduct their "command services" free from the dread of insult and interruption. In 1728, thirty years after the death of Fox, Voltaire could prophesy with genuine regret :

"Je ne puis deviner quel sera la sort de la Religion des Quakers en Amérique, mais je vois qu'elle dépérit tous les jours à Londres. Par tout païs la Religion dominante, quand elle ne persécute point, engloutit à la longue toutes les autres."*

A third reason for decline may be found in the loss of the early evangelical spirit, which seems to have deserted the Quaker Church with its abandonment of foreign missionary enterprise. Though still noted for individual deeds of mercy, the Friends were tending more and more to become a clique of self-satisfied and self-engrossed believers. "Threshing Meetings" fell into disuse; retired meetings were held in complete silence, or degenerated into a babble of voices.

The growing illiteracy of the members contributed to this result. Fox's distrust of "carnal learning" had been counteracted in his own case by natural genius, and during his lifetime had made little headway amongst his followers. Ellwood first became conscious of his loss of education when, as he says "I came amongst the Quakers,

* Voltaire, "Lettres Philosophiques," vol. i., p. 50. Cornely et Cie., Paris, 1909.

and applied myself with utmost Diligence, at all leisure times, to recover it."* It was through Isaac Penington, himself the learned author of many Quaker books, that he gained his introduction to Milton. Stubbs, the soldier missionary, was familiar with both European and Oriental languages. Samuel Fisher, a man of University education, encountered Vice-Chancellor Owen with his own weapons, and Barclay the Apologist made the Quaker doctrines respected throughout Europe. But with the beginning of the eighteenth century their places were being taken by leaders who were devoid of education, and had learnt to despise the "enthusiasm" which might have supplied their deficiencies.

The first Quakers had been isolated from their fellow-Dissenters by their tenacity of belief, and refusal to temporize in the face of persecution. Friends of the reign of Anne and the Georges were equally isolated by a deliberate singularity and an insistence upon unimportant detail. Fox's refusal of "hat-honour" and verbal salutations had its root in conscience, and was defended by him and his immediate followers at the cost of imprisonment and death. When the risk of persecution was removed, these abstentions from customary courtesy became insincere in their turn, and were as much matters of form as the civility which they had supplanted.

The adoption of a distinctive costume, which Margaret Fox in her old age had foreseen and deprecated, assumed tremendous importance with the disappearance of larger issues. The wearing of simple clothes and the discarding of unnecessary ornament had been felt "as a great cross" by women of gentle birth, such as Mary Penington and Barbara Blaugdone, who had been accustomed to the laces and satins of the time of Charles I. They had endured it as a protest against useless expenditure and as a plea for simplicity in every detail of life. In their day no distinctive costume had been chosen by the Quakers;

* Ellwood, p. 121.

it was the result, not at first of deliberate choice, but of refusal to change a style which had once been general, to meet the demands of a changing mode. Throughout the eighteenth century, so stationary was the ground-work of fashion, that a Quaker garment was remarkable rather for its omissions of detail than its eccentricity of cut. A Minute issued in 1712 by the Women's Meeting at York seems to mark the hardening of this custom into a definite rule. It was composed only thirteen years after Margaret Fox's last letter to Friends, in which she had pleaded for liberty in the choice of fashion and colour.

"We desire an alteration in these things . . . as follows, viz.: Friends' gowns made indecently, one part over long and the other too short, with lead in the sleeves; and that Friends should come to a stability and be satisfied in the shape and compass that Truth leads into, without changing as the world changes: also black or coloured silk or muslin aprons, as likewise hoods or scarves not too long or broad: and we desire that Friends keep clear of putting on their handkerchieves according to the fashion of the world . . . also that Friends' clothes may be a dark, modest colour, and not have the hair cut or powdered."*

As early as 1687 these domestic and personal details were placed under the care of inspectors,

"visitors or visiting friends" were appointed in Ireland "to caution Friends"—so ran their mandate—"against any breach of simplicity in buying or selling or bargaining: superfluity in apparel, furniture, and household stuff."

On these inquisitorial visits the householder was summoned to render account of his diligence in worship. He was admonished

"that he should not run into debt, nor contract great trades beyond the bounds of moderation, or his capacity to manage."† Dublin Friends, who were shopkeepers, were "recommended not to sell needless and vain things—gold and silver lace, ribbons, etc."†

* Quoted in "The Story of Quakerism," p. 103.

† Rutt, pp. 389, 441.

Social life, lit up no longer by the fires of persecution, took on the same drab uniformity. Recreations of all kinds, including music meetings and holidays, were sternly forbidden, parents being advised to watch over their children and servants, "and to inculcate into them an early aversion to such practices."* It is fair to add, however, that a corresponding "sense of that inexpressible Comfort and Delight which attends the exercise of true Religion and Virtue" was "raised" in the majority of cases with conspicuous success: and many Friends' biographies might be cited as witness to the peaceful happiness of their home life at this period. But the penalty of excommunication hung over the young Quaker who sought for friendship outside his own circle. While, on the one hand, all children of Friends were accounted Friends by right of "Birthright Membership," the introduction of new blood was forbidden by a law "against marrying out." By its provisions the Quaker, man or woman, who married a non-Quaker was disowned and dismissed from membership. This short-sighted law was in force until the last fifty years, and entailed, amongst other disastrous consequences, the loss of the majority of Elizabeth Fry's children to Quakerism.†

In spite, or perhaps more correctly, because, of these precautions, it became obvious that the rising generation "were seeking the friendship of the world, though," in the words of Dr. John Rutty, "the way is now so easy to them, and nothing expected from them but to follow the Quaker tradition."

When this able physician and entertaining diarist set himself in the year 1751 to the ungrateful task of discovering the cause of decline in Church membership, he first laid his finger upon the neglect of week-day meetings. Modern Friends, he complained,

* Rutty, p. 435.

† "Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry," vol. ii., p. 257. London, 1847.

"had lost the spirit of their ancestors, whom no outward threats nor Penalties could deter from assembling together, to perform public Worship to Almighty God, whilst other Professors fled into Corners."

It is easy for us, for whom the early and middle periods of Quakerism are clearly defined and distinguished, to discern the weak spot in this diagnosis. No conscientious parsimony in silver buttons, nor the purest enthusiasm for working on holidays, not even a meticulous care for one's own salvation, of which these were the symptoms, could take the place of the joy of battle and the passion for self-surrender which had inspired the Quakers in the days of persecution.

Women Quakers seem to have resisted the influences of decay with greater success than their brethren. The public life which was still open to them at this time of decadence acted as a preservative against stagnation, and sufficiently separated them from the world without the aid of artificial barriers. Rebecca Travers, writing to Fox in her old age, had given an account of the state of the London Meeting in 1676 which was prophetic of the years which were to follow :

"The ancient love among some of the brethren waxes cold : too much love of this world stains our pristine glory, when it was said, even by our enemies, they so love one another that we shall never be able to break them. But the Women's Meetings are accompanied with the power and presence of the Lord as ever—our service is great, and our supply faileth not."*

While the men, cut off by law from University and civic careers, devoted themselves, in spite of all warnings, to the making of money, the women continued the task of distributing it to the poor and sick.

"Ministers," says Rutty again, "have allowed the cares of the World to interpose : this is a Temptation more incident to the Men, than to those of the Female Sex, whose superior diligence in their Travels on this Account we have of late years been witnesses of."†

* Barclay MSS. in Devonshire House.

† Rutty, p. 477.

The most important legacy bequeathed by Fox to his women followers—the consciousness of equality with their brethren—was never wholly lost, even in the dark ages of the eighteenth century. In 1778 it found an exponent in Mrs. Knowles, whom Boswell describes as “the fair Quaker, well-known for her various talents.” This lady ventured, in the presence of Dr. Johnson himself, that most gallant of anti-feminists, to protest against the assumed superiority of men, “to which,” said she, “I do not see how they are entitled.” Overpowered, if not convinced, by her male audience, she fell back upon an aspiration which she surely expected to pass unchallenged. “Well, I hope that in another world the sexes will be equal.” It was then that Boswell, whose admiration for Mrs. Knowles’s “sutile pictures, or embroideries,” was only equalled by his contempt for her reasoning faculties, uttered his priceless dictum:

“That is being too ambitious, madam. *We* might as well desire to be equal with the angels. . . . It is enough if we be happy according to our several capacities.”*

Before the death of George Whitehead in 1723 it must have been clear to the veteran preacher that the mantle of Fox had fallen upon none of his disciples. The task of evangelizing England, though never so pressing, must fall to strange workers, under another name. The Quakers who had sent Mary Fisher to convert the Grand Turk, who had plied the Court with personal and written appeals, who had crowded the gaols with unrepentant prisoners, and filled the hearts of officiating priests with terror, had been transformed by thirty years of peace into a respected sect of Quietists, fading day by day into extinction. In 1730 John Wesley’s father wrote an elegy on the death of Mr. Morgan, the first, though unacknowledged, Methodist. After praising the young man for his combination of fasting and works of mercy, he congratulates him on his escape from the

* Boswell’s “Life of Johnson,” vol. iv., p. 290. Constable, 1896.

"Whims of Molinos, lost in rapture's mist,
Or Quaker, late-reforming quietist." *

Apart from the reproach which was probably conveyed by the somewhat ambiguous adjective, the couplet is interesting for the light it sheds upon the position of the Quaker Church on the eve of the Methodist Revival. When ten years later the same movings of the Spirit began to attend the preaching of Wesley as had been familiar to the congregations of Fox and Burrough, no suspicion visited the eighteenth-century Quakers that these manifestations, exaggerated, even blasphemous as they appeared, were but a repetition of their own beginnings. A Quaker standing by amidst the cries and groans of a heart-stricken audience "was not a little displeased," says Wesley in his Journal, "at the dissimulation of these creatures."† Again, a few weeks later, he records :

"I had much talk with one who is called a Quaker : but he could not receive my saying. I was too strict for him, and talked of such a perfection as he could not think necessary : being persuaded, there was no harm in costly apparel, provided it was plain and grave : nor in putting scarlet or gold upon our houses, so it were not upon our clothes "†

—a recreant Quaker, surely, and in much need of the admonitions of the Dublin "visitors." Though friendly argument and occasional conversion are mentioned here and there in Wesley's Journal, no thought of sharing in the work and benefits of the Revival seems to have occurred to the successors of Fox's "Seventy from the North."

The Methodists had stepped into the van abandoned by the Quakers through their growing riches and respectability ; as the Methodists, grown rich and respectable in their turn, were to cede it a century later to the Salvation Army.

* Wesley's Works, vol. i., p. 16. London, 1829.

† *Ibid.*, p. 190.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

If the Methodist Revival had little direct influence upon Quakerism, it could not fail to set an object lesson before a Church which had once known the meaning of courage and self-surrender. In 1760 the Yearly Meeting appointed a Committee of its most earnest members to visit the meetings throughout England and endeavour to bring about a reform. These visitors, unfortunately, were still attentive to outward rather than inward perfection, but their appointment was symptomatic of a widespread discontent.* It was the signal for a gradual expansion of interest and a growing pre-occupation in social problems which have become the chief characteristics of modern Quakerism.

In 1779 the first step towards reform was taken in the opening of the Ackworth school for the children of poor Friends. This was a recurrence to the policy of Fox, who, in strange contrast to his distrust of college training, had established schools for boys and girls at Waltham and Shacklewell, desiring that they should be instructed "in whatsoever thinges was civill and usefull in ye creation."† The step was quickly justified. While Ackworth came to be considered, even outside Quakerism, as one of the best schools in the country, it undermined the contempt for education, which for the last hundred years had hindered the expansion and lowered the status of the Society.

The close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries were crowded with work for the emancipation of the slaves, many Friends being actively associated with Wilberforce in the struggle which ended in 1807 with the Emancipation Act.

It was in the winter of 1812-1813 that Elizabeth Fry revived the great Quaker tradition which had been broken for 150 years, and bought back for Friends the glory which had been theirs as the first helpers and champions of the prisoner. The reforms which she

* "Story of Quakerism," p. 174 *et seq.*

† Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 119.

effected followed in almost every detail the ideal, then unattainable, which Elizabeth Hooton had set before "Him in Authority" in her letter from Lincoln Castle. Her first visit to Newgate at the instigation of a stranger Friend, Stephen Grellet, was the beginning of a revolution in prison conditions and discipline. With eleven other women, she formed an "Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate," whose success was so marked and so immediate that the city authorities adopted its rules as part of their prison regulations. Not content with caring for the women under her charge, she visited every convict-ship as it left the Thames, reading and praying with the women prisoners. She provided them with materials for work during the voyage, whose sale might keep them from starvation during their first days at the Penal Settlement. It was at her instigation that homes worthy of the name were at last opened at Paramatta and Hobart's Town to receive them on arrival. Her work for prisoners, though it has overshadowed her other activities, was but one of many beneficent schemes. She opened a shelter for homeless children in London, and organized libraries for coastguardsmen in 600 stations around Great Britain. The ceaseless ingenuity and self-sacrifice of her service can only be explained by her own words spoken as she lay dying:

"I can say one thing—since my heart was touched at seventeen years old I believe I never have awakened from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or by night, without my first waking thought being how best I might serve my Lord."*

During the same years another interest which had lain very near to the heart of Fox and his contemporaries was revived amongst Friends. In 1823 Hannah Kilham sailed for Sierra Leone to live amongst and educate the colony of freed slaves which had been founded in 1787. Her preparation for this work is in striking contrast to the

* "Memoir of Elizabeth Fry," vol ii., p. 470.

entire lack of method employed by the seventeenth-century missionaries, six years being spent in the training of two negro helpers, and the compiling with their assistance of small educational books in the African dialect. Arriving at Bathurst, Hannah Kilham, with her friend Ann Thompson, devoted herself to teaching the children, superintending also the training of native teachers, and the establishment of an agricultural settlement. After nine years she fell a victim to fever, and her work was broken off.

During the thirty years which followed the interest of Friends as a whole was being enlisted in foreign affairs. Their "concern" in the right government of India culminated in 1858 in a memorial against the opium traffic, addressed to Parliament by the Meeting for Sufferings. But it was not until 1865 that the first Quaker Foreign Missionary Committee was provisionally appointed, to develop in 1868 into the Friends' Foreign Mission Association. It is interesting to find that the first missionary sent out officially by the Quaker Church was a woman, Rachel Metcalfe, who had for ten years felt a call to work in India.

From that date the number of men and women missionaries has been steadily increasing. To-day five "fields," as they are called—India, Madagascar, Syria, China, and Ceylon—are being opened up under the direction of the Missionary Association. In 1883 the intelligent sympathy of Friends at home was insured for Foreign Missions through the founding, by Ellen Barclay, of the Missionary Helpers' Union, which now numbers 263 branches.

Meantime home mission work has kept pace step by step with the work abroad, and one can only mention a few of its varied activities. Foremost and most widely known is the Adult School Movement, founded in 1845, which now numbers 18,500 scholars in England alone. The Bedford Institute represents an attempt "to help

people all through the week," and is now a federation of nine separate missions, working for social and religious improvement in different parts of London. One of the latest and most significant of Quaker Associations is the Friends' Social Union, founded in 1903,

"to evoke the spirit of justice and social service, and to claim the recognition of the Christian law in all human relationships."

The mere lists of names of committees, secretaries, and lecturers of these various societies are an inspiring sight to a woman accustomed to the almost exclusively male *personnel* represented in the Minutes of other Churches—at least one-half of the ruling offices and, as it appears to a cursory glance, the majority of the secretaryships being held by women.

The short obituary of Mrs. Rendel Harris, which was published in the *Times* in June, 1914, may be quoted, in conclusion, as a summary of the character and work of the ideal Quaker woman of our own time.

"Helen Balkwill, wife of a distinguished Cambridge theologian, came of a family who have been leaders in the Society of Friends for several generations. Her remarkable powers, both as a preacher and as a platform speaker were early recognized, and she was sent more than once as a delegate of the Society to the United States to inspect their religious and philanthropic institutions in the New World. In 1880 she was married to Dr. Rendel Harris, then a Fellow of Clare College, and returned to the United States with him in 1882, when he was appointed to a post in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

"In 1896 they together undertook a journey which had made their names a household word in Armenia. The sufferings of the people during the massacres of 1895 entered into her soul. She founded orphanages, hospitals and schools, and the Helen Harris Home, which will be a lasting memorial to her. In the following year she undertook a winter journey to St. Petersburg, and succeeded in laying the case of the Armenians before more than one member of the Imperial family.

“At the beginning of the century she went to South Africa, again as a Quaker delegate, to the British Concentration Camps, of which she had till then strongly disapproved, as being founded on ‘methods of barbarism.’ She went out, in fact, a pro-Boer, but the real greatness of her character revealed itself, for on her return she had the courage to own that she had been mistaken, and that the British Generals were doing all that was humanly possible to promote the welfare and comfort of the fugitive Boer families. Mrs. Harris leaves no children; but her memory will be an abiding inspiration to many whom she fed, nursed, or guided into the way of righteousness on four of the world’s great continents.”

It seems, indeed, that the voice of Quakerism, silent for more than a century, is once more making itself heard in England and across the seas. Its ancient message, born amidst the clamours of the Civil War, and nursed in the prisons of the Restoration, is singularly fresh and well-timed to our modern perplexities. Fox’s cardinal doctrine of the Inward Light, which can only be cultivated and followed through silence, and escape from outward distractions; his discouragement of accumulated riches, and of outward show or ostentation; the equal place he accorded to women in Church work, administration, and direct ministerial service—these are ideals which might well be pondered by a people who have forgotten, as we have forgotten, the uses of leisure and the art of meditation, who tolerate unashamed the direst extremes of riches and poverty, and who, by our refusal to grant equal rights to our women, have produced a mutual bitterness between the sexes which is without parallel in history. But chiefly his doctrine of the brotherhood of men and nations, Utopian though it seemed a year ago, is taking new shape and meaning amidst the horrors of the Belgian battlefields: while his summons to lay down the sword, first formulated before the Battle of Worcester, still urges its silent wooing beyond the clash of this last, and as we believe, most inevitable of conflicts—the war which is to end war.

George Fox himself, who gave his life to promote "the liberty of the Creation," seems to have been conscious that his message would claim an audience outside the bounds of his own age or country. His vision at the time of the Conventicle Act sums up, in his mystical style, the aims of his work and its extent. With its hint of endeavour lasting through the centuries, it forms a fitting close to an attempt to restate his ideals, and to recapture, however imperfectly, the spirit of his women followers:

"I had a vision about yt time yt I was in this travaile and suffringes yt I was walkeinge in ye feildes and many frendes was with mee, and I bid ym digge in ye earth: and they did and I went doune: and there was a mighty vault toppe full of people kept under ye earth, rockes, and stones: and soe I bid ym break open ye earth and lett all ye people out: and they did, and all ye people came foorth to liberty and it was a mighty place.

"And when they had donne I went on, and bid ym digge againe: they did, and there was a mighty vault full of people, and I bid ym throwe it doune, and lett all ye people out and soe they did.

"And I went on againe, and bid ym digge againe, and ffrends said unto mee: George, thou findes out all thinges. And soe there they digged, and I went doune, and went along ye vault, and there sate a woman in white lookeinge att time how it past away."*

* Fox's Journal, vol. ii., p. 175.

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